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Film between Italy and the United States

Giuliana Muscio

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Introduction

> Those peoples not organized in nations . . . were not only outside of the system of nations, they were outside of its understanding of "normal" time, or put differently, they were "backward." . . . The world was divided between history and anthropology: history taking those peoples organized into nations, with literatures and archives, leaving for anthropology all differently organized peoples, reduced to nonentities.
>
> —BENDER, *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*[1]

Napoli/New York/Hollywood investigates the work of Italian immigrant performers and the impact of the Italian stage tradition and Italian cinema on Hollywood and the American entertainment industry from the 1890s to today. This story, however, strives to escape the trap of national historiographies that have erased the experience of the Italian immigrant stage from history and repositioned it within anthropology or folklore.

Considering the weakness of the Italian national identity and the imperialism implicit in the adjective *American*, which usurps two continents in a single nation,[2] this history questions national histories of migration and espouses approaches to global history. It thus challenges American exceptionalism by taking into account the multidirectionality of the Italian diaspora and forces attention on Italian emigration and issues of colonialism and race that the country continues to ignore. Instead it proposes a transatlantic and transcultural history highlighting the continuous flow of exchange underpinning these phenomena.

Debates on ethnicity, globalization, migration, and identity have spawned the concept of cosmopolitanism, which provides historians and cultural scholars with a dynamic approach through which to address "difference" and "identity." As "a mode of critical thinking that is committed to struggling with the paradoxes and contradictions of cultural identity and discourse," cosmopolitanism provides a useful model to escape the "unproductive double binds of multiculturalism and an unreflective hegemonic universalism," and to move "beyond cultural pluralism by thinking, at one and the same time, about difference *and* a democratic common ground and cultural field of mutual influence and growth."[3]

Due to the very nature of their art, which requires them to take up different identities, performers are inherently cosmopolitan, and especially so Italian immigrant artists, as they inherited the ancient tradition of Neapolitan cosmopolitanism and experienced international Hollywood and transnational entertainment media.[4]

Napoli/New York/Hollywood proposes a cosmopolitan and global history approach but focuses on the historical specificity of both the Italian stage traditions and the transcultural traits of the American experience of Italian migrants. This paradigm is centered on exchanges, interactions, and commonalities, rather than looking for primacy or unnaturally freezing cultural identities. As William McNeill noted, in every epoch, among the factors that favor cultural exchange there were frontier men, merchants, missionaries, travelers, and, above all, migrants;[5] and to the first group we can add traveling players. Italian immigrant actors in the United States were frontier men who moved from Naples to Little Italy in New York, ventured onto Broadway, and reached Hollywood, offering their special artistic qualities but also learning new skills from Americans and from other immigrant performers in a fertile and reciprocal exchange.

Often originating from the popular theatrical culture of Italy's southern regions, these performers played an important role in the history of Italian emigration and Italian culture abroad also by recreating the Neapolitan cultural *koinè*, the common southern language and culture that was to become the core around which Italian American culture would be built. The history of Italian and Italian American performers in the United States is so inextricably related to the history of the Italian diaspora that one actually becomes the history of the other and vice versa.

The sheer volume of southern Italian and second-generation Italian American performers of southern origins in the United States give this text an almost encyclopedic feel; it also offers new perspectives without losing sight of the sociohistorical context—the history of the Italian diaspora and its relationship with national and global histories. In such an interdisciplinary approach, the numerous links to transatlantic experiences and film history form a wealth of empirical evidence in support of our account.

The Structure of the Book

The book is divided into three periods, covering the years 1895 to 1930 (chapters 1, 2, 3), 1930 to 1945 (chapters 4 and 5), and 1946 to the present (chapter 6). Chapters 1 through 3 explore the uneven and culturally conflicted relationship between Italy (and Europe) and the United States between 1895 and 1930. The main characteristic of this period is the American move toward the construction of an "irresistible empire," as Victoria de Grazia put it (a transatlantic process that continues to the present and positions Italy as part of Europe). This process is more visible in relation to the making of American films in Italy, a sort of filmic Grand Tour (see chapter 3), but it originated from the same economic mechanisms that required an immigrant work force in the United States and tried to force their Americanization (see chapters 2 and 4). In American silent cinema, Italian opera stars

(Enrico Caruso and Lina Cavalieri), the popularity of Italian films, and the hiring of Italian actors from the Italian film industry and of performers from the Italian immigrant stage supplied cultural legitimization to a cinema engaged in its international expansion (see chapter 1).

The historical backdrop to chapters 4 and 5 is Fascism and the New Deal, and thus the process of the nationalization of the masses in general and the Italian American experience in particular, with the creation of a semi-autonomous culture using an idiom of its own. Although the hybrid languages spoken by the immigrants varied widely depending upon their own dialects spoken in Italy, Neapolitan exerted an especially strong influence. I will thus use the term *Napolglish* to simplify the definition of the language that emerged. This culture was slow to take on board either Americanization or the Italianization supported by the Fascist regime, which aimed to inspire a new feeling of "Italian pride." Leonard Covello and other reformers encouraged the use of the official Italian language as a means of overcoming the fragmented character of the community through adhesion to a national identity able to strengthen its sociopolitical position in New Deal America. However, the adoption of the official Italian language by Italian Americans was, in part for want of exposure, somewhat limited, leaving room for the use of Napolglish and for a "Neapolitan synecdoche," that is, the experience of Italians as if they were all Neapolitans, or southerners.

The coming of sound posed la *questione della lingua* and nationalization, emphasizing the relationship between language and national identity both for Italy and the United States: the introduction of multiple language versions (MLVs) of new films in Hollywood failed as an experiment because they broke down the intimate relationship between American cinema and the English language. The failure of the Hollywood-made MLVs contrasts with the successful experiments of making European versions of American films with cast and crews from different countries in Joinville, France, a strategy that was more in line with the cooptation policy of European performers of the 1920s.

The diasporic community on the East Coast reacted to the difficulties posed by the introduction of sound (in English) by making its own films, which were an intermedia product of the experience of the immigrant stage, combined with radio and popular music, that followed the Neapolitan traditions of *sceneggiata* (popular drama with songs) and *macchietta* (comic sketches with music) and at times demonstrated particular social sensibility. In these films, the actors used their language, Napolglish, and represented in documentary-like detail their experiences in *sceneggiate* or in *macchiettas*, as shown, for example, in *The Immigrant* (*Santa Lucia Luntana*) and *The Movie Actor* (with Farfariello), respectively. But the identification of Italian immigrants in the United States should not discount the impact of northern Italians, and the cultural differences between East and West Coasts, where the presence of Italians from northern and central Italy was more consistent. Therefore, running parallel to the identification of the southern/Neapolitan *spettacolo* with the East Coast, the Italian theater in San Francisco proposed more conventionally Italian (and Tuscan) programs. In this other segment of the community, in California, regionalism was much less marked, and Italian culture and language dominated. In fact, in 1930, Italians in Hollywood made the film *Sei tu l'amore?* in Italian, while Italians on the East Coast made theirs in dialect. Despite these differences, the Italian image as cradle of the arts, the tradition of the *grande attore italiano* and opera are the constants that unify both these traditions.

In classical Hollywood cinema, their naturalist acting and versatility justify the use of so many Italian character actors, whose style contributed to the construction of film genres and of narrative simplifications within classical American films. After the introduction of sound, Italian performers often represented Latinos or worked on Spanish versions of Hollywood films. It should not be forgotten that Italians shared similar racial conditions with Mexicans (white but "ill-treated") but also that the forced Mexican Repatriation from 1929 to 1939 probably caused a shortage of Mexican performers in Hollywood.

Chapter 6 looks at the years following the end of World War II which promoted Italy as an ally in international politics, and as the creator of a respected (hegemonic) film culture: Neorealism, Hollywood on the Tiber, and the Italian American cinema itself. The cinematographic continuity it represents resides in the realistic traditions, naturalism, and the special humanism and social sensibility of Italian American culture. The postwar period was a watershed in many ways, not least in terms of the mode in which one of the most enduring stereotypes surrounding Italians, whether in the United States or in the home country, endured: emotionality. Within a variety of film genres, American cinema has always "exoticized" the "emotionality" of the Italian characters, who were generally presented either violent or pathetic. Although emotionality was the weak spot of "the Italian" in American silent and classical cinema, nowadays Italian American filmmakers represent complex emotions as an asset that has infused an increasingly special effects– and adolescent psychology–driven contemporary American cinema with new life.

The Largest Wave of Immigrants in History

According to Mark Choate, "Between 1880 and 1915, thirteen million Italians emigrated to North and South America, Europe and the Mediterranean Basin, launching the largest emigration from any country in recorded world history."[6] As Donna Gabaccia noted, however, "Before 1914, the largest group [of Italian emigrants]—a little less than a third of the total—did go to the United States. But almost half of these were not immigrants; they were male sojourners who then returned home to Italy. Nearly a quarter of Italian migrants before the First World War went to Argentina and Brazil, and the largest number (just under half) went to other European countries."[7] Thus, historically, Italian emigration is multidirectional and not necessarily permanent. Furthermore, if we consider Italian migration in general (that is, not only to the United States), it continued during the interwar years, when four million people left Italy, and after World War II, when eight million Italians left home to form new diasporic communities in Europe, Australia, the United States, and Canada.

From a quantitative point of view, before World War I, Italians emigrated in about equal numbers (about five million) to the United States and Latin America. There is, however, a significant difference between the two flows, both in terms of the point of departure and that of arrival, with different timeframes too. The majority of Italian emigrants to South America moved from northern Italy before and around the unification in 1861, when Latin America offered land and opportunities; southern Italians emigrated later, at the end of the nineteenth century, as a result of the economic and social failure of unification, and they settled in the urban industrial areas of the United States. Above all, these flows differ in terms of their cultural and racial implications: while the Italian diaspora in Latin America rapidly integrated within Hispanic colonial societies, Italian immigrants in the United States, along with immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, were opposed by nativists.[8] "Approximately 80 percent of them came from the poor, backward southern portion of Italy known as the *Mezzogiorno*—'the land that time forgot,'" as Cosco calls it.[9] However, such a characterization of Italian immigrants, including references to their backward culture, ignores the remaining 20 percent (or more) of Italian migrants who did not come from the South of Italy, and fails to take into account the fragmentation of Italian regional cultures and social differences.

Nationalistic and cultural prejudices permeate this history through the filters of the Southern Question in Italy and the impact of the big wave of immigrants to the United States.[10] "In Italy, and in Italian studies," Jane Schneider argues, "the 'Southern Question' evokes a powerful image of the provinces south of Rome as different from the rest of the peninsula, above all for their historic poverty and economic underdevelopment, their engagement in a clientelistic style of politics, and their cultural support for patriarchal gender relations and for various manifestations of organized crime." Political as well as cultural, the Southern Question created (or developed) a negative image of southern Italians, according to Schneider, representing them as "passionate, undisciplined, rebellious, intensely competitive, and incapable of generating group solidarity or engaging in collective action, they were and are, as the cliché would have it, unable to build the rational, orderly, civic cultures that, in the North, underwrote the emergence of industrial capitalist society."[11] This negative view of southern Italians still circulates in the populist slogans of the *Lega Nord* party in Italy and is widespread in the entertainment and news media.

But why did the Southern Question fully emerge at the very moment of Italy's unification, that is to say, after Garibaldi "liberated" southern Italy and the kingdom of (northwest) Italy annexed the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies? "The reasons for this, in addition to the socially and politically fragmentary nature of the South," John Dickie argues in the introduction to his influential *Darkest Italy*, "lie with the weakness of the North as a power container, or pole of attraction for collective political identities." Indeed, while the Bourbon kingdom was centuries old and rooted in glorious European dynasties, a "northern state actually existed for no longer than a few months before Garibaldi's expedition to Sicily."[12] Of course, it is undeniable that the economy of the South and its social conditions were underdeveloped in 1861, but there were striking contradictions too.[13] "Without a substantial economic need for further education," Dickie notes, "[the South] had a higher percentage of its population at secondary schools and universities than the North and the center."[14] Indeed, southern Italy is the heir to all the Mediterranean cultures; it incorporates Greek, Roman, Arab, and Norman influences. It is cosmopolitan, articulated, and "popular" in the noblest sense of the word.

The Southern Question was connected with a harsh historical and social reality, but it was also an ideological construct, associating the *Mezzogiorno* with a negative stereotype that undermined the formation of national identity, albeit without destroying the "spirit of nationality."[15]

The construction of this identity, which required a South to valorize the North, recurred at the time of the big wave of emigration, when Italians ended up being used as a deforming mirror to reflect back American identity. Both the United States and Italy were young nations; Italy, like the United States, had emerged from a civil war against its southern states, as the war against the southern brigandage manifested itself at that time. Furthermore, Italian anti–southern Italian prejudice was articulated through the anthropological theories of Cesare Lombroso and Alfredo Niceforo who introduced racial issues easily linked at a later date to American racism.

Discussing the southern Italian identity stereotype within this cultural climate, Dickie notes how the South became a contradictory imaginary, "a place of illiteracy, superstition, and magic; of corruption, brigandage, and cannibalism; of pastoral beauty and tranquility, admixed with dirt and disease; a cradle of Italian and European civilization that is vaguely, dangerously, alluringly African and Oriental. . . . The barbarous, the primitive, the violent, the irrational, the feminine, the African: these and other values—often but not always negatively connoted—were repeatedly located in the Mezzogiorno as foils to definitions of Italy."[16] This contradictory and prejudiced representation of the South—ready to be transferred onto the image of Italy *tout court*—still informs the majority of discussions of southern culture, dragging along with it two theoretical fallacies which construct the South "as an organic totality" and see it dualistically "as a failed version of some scarcely defined idea of the North, Italy, Europe or civilization."[17]

To the contrary, the "southern Italian" and "the Italian" have always coexisted both in their culture and their perception or representation.[18] Although it is necessary to identify the cultural geography of the performers, this specification never erases the wholeness of their Italianness.

A relevant issue for the analysis of films throughout this book is the construction of stereotypes, and specifically the reduction of the contradictory image of the South to the *picturesque*,[19] an interpretation proposed by Giorgio Bertellini in his *Italy in Early American Cinema*.[20]

At the center of this cultural construction is the juxtaposition Nature/Culture.[21] The work of (southern) Italian performers reverses instead this opposition: through their naturalist acting, the use of the body, and their stage traditions, they can propose instead a harmonious fusion of nature and art.

After the "unification" of Italy, exclusion from political participation, lack of land reform, and heavy taxation—along with the removal of protectionist tariffs on agricultural goods (imposed to favor the burgeoning northern industries) in combination with military repression—made living conditions difficult for southern Italians: they emigrated *en masse* in the very period that Italy began to seek colonies in North Africa. However, contrary to prevailing opinion, emigration was not—or at least not only—a welcome relief to underproduction, overpopulation, and social unrest in the south, because it implied the loss of its rural labor force for the *latifondisti*, the feudal landowners. Thus, an anti-emigrationist (and anti–southern Italian) prejudice runs through both Italian and American history.[22] In the United States, anti–southern Italian prejudice, "refined" by Niceforo's racist anthropological theories, entered the debate on the "color line" and "whiteness" regarding "new immigrants."[23] Although there is now general agreement that Italians were "white on arrival," and thus potential citizens and voters, nevertheless the harshness of anti-Italian prejudice and discrimination included lynching and attempts to disenfranchise and segregate them in the South. In fact, the lynching of eleven Sicilians in New Orleans in 1890 "was, and remains, the largest mass lynching in American history, according to figures compiled by the NAACP."[24] Nor can we ignore their internment during World War II, the designation of six hundred thousand Italian nationals as enemy aliens who faced a number of restrictions and the thousands on the West Coast who were relocated from the waterfront and subjected to more severe restrictions.[25]

The Italian diaspora was a continuous journey between the Atlantic shores. It was not a linear move from a place of poverty to a longed-for destination, but a circular one, as is evident from the number of returns: 58.6 percent returned from the United States while (only) 44.5 percent of the Italians who emigrated to Latin America returned home.[26] Racial and social conditions for southern Italian migrants in the United States were particularly harsh and could, in themselves, explain the high rate of returns. But the statistics on returns—significant for both North and South America—are in need of radical revision when narrating the cultural strategy of the diasporic community. When the return home is one of the aims of the journey in the first place, it generates a resistance to assimilation—especially from a linguistic point of view—and strengthens attachment to traditions. "No other people emigrated in so many different directions, reaching numbers so elevated both in relative and absolute terms, and few others showed an attachment so visceral to the region of origin or returned in such a large percentage."[27] The real dream remained that of "home," as long as one came back with *moneta*, money, like the immigrants in the film *Santa Lucia Luntana* (Harold Godsoe, 1931), whose dream was not the American Dream, but the Neapolitan Dream—a mythical return, as in the famous title song. Far from being a regressive attitude, this dream stimulated the immigrants' industriousness and lead them to utilize modern production methods in order to produce food and entertainment consonant with their traditions and culture, both in New York and California. But this process happened while they interacted with other ethnic groups, not just with "American culture."[28]

Italian Performers in the United States

The performers considered in this book are Italian not only because of their origins—their blood—but because their theatrical culture was Italian, a culture that embraced "high" and "low," tragedy and comedy, music, dance and even acrobatics, naturalism and improvisation. As Herbert Gutman argued, culture is a resource whereby a subaltern group can resist oppression and assert its identity.[29] The performing arts in particular are a winning card in Italian culture, rooted as they are in ancient traditions, in the diverse cultures that crossed the peninsula—Greeks, Arabs, Normans, Spanish, Austrian and French—and in their great contribution to theater and music.

Italian performers, actors, and musicians enjoyed a privileged status from a sociocultural perspective, to the point that they did not need a visa, and when they entered the United States they did not undergo the scrutiny that immigrants were subjected to on Ellis Island. This also makes it more difficult for us today to trace them back through history, as there is no official documentation on their entry. Italian performers proposed Italy as a "good object," associated with art, emotions, and nature—elements particularly appreciated by the American upper classes when traveling on their Italian "Grand Tour." But, as Richard H. Broadhead argues, the love for "beautiful Italy" coincided with the contempt for his inhabitants, especially when they entered their country.[30]

Indeed, the relationship between Americans and Italian immigrants was quite contradictory, especially in the 1890s.[31] And yet, as this account aims to show, "never before and since has American writing been so absorbed with Italians as it [was] during the Gilded Age."[32] Loved and also hated, but more "visible" in public spaces, the work of Italian performers was limited by the same linguistic and institutional restrictions that affected the lives of Italian immigrants and influenced both the roles actors were cast for and their opportunities for employment outside the community.

Italian performers built on the special cultural strength of long-standing traditions of *spettacolo* such as commedia dell'arte, *melodramma*, and *opera buffa*. The cosmopolitan success of *opera buffa* had to do with its seeming simplicity—a modern trait that was appreciated across classes during the move from the Baroque to the Romantic period within the rational culture of the Enlightenment. Deeply cross-class and characterized by a structural relationship with music and the preeminence of performance over text, both commedia dell'arte and *melodramma*,[33] which had developed in the seventeenth century, were rooted in oral culture. The two centers of Italian *spettacolo*[34] were Venice—with commedia dell'arte and the first public theaters in the modern Western world, not to mention Vivaldi and Baroque music—in the north, and Naples with its outstanding musical production in the south.

These theatrical forms were fundamental in determining the structure of a specifically Italian and Neapolitan cultural tradition of performance from within. Why Neapolitan?[35] Because Naples was "the largest city in Italy and the residence of a rich aristocracy" with "a large diverse public," and by the late seventeenth century, "many commercial theatres operated" there.[36] Yet, as Giuseppe Galasso argues, Naples was not only a city, but "a synthesis, also in ethnic and social terms, of the entire southern Italy," a regional metropolis, characterized by a "continuity between the city and the countryside."[37] It is this extensive use of the concept of the Neapolitan metropolis that makes it possible to consider southern Italian performers as an integral part of the hegemonic Neapolitan *cultura dello spettacolo* (culture of performing arts).

On the musical scene, Naples stood "unrivaled throughout most of the [eighteenth] century. It played a crucial role in shaping the new genre of comic opera which was at the core of Enlightenment ideas about theater."[38] In 1737, Charles of Bourbon inaugurated the magnificent Royal San Carlo Theatre, which would then become the model for the construction of opera houses throughout Europe. During the Enlightenment, Naples was also an active participant in European intellectual debates in addition to establishing itself as the capital of the musical world.[39] Thus, Naples could count on intellectuals, composers, and, fundamentally, four conservatories, originally set up to care for orphans. This is a crucial element in this account because it explains the widespread phenomenon of the musical education enjoyed by the lower strata of the southern Italian population. Indeed "musical education was one of the opportunities conservatories offered their wards to develop skills that might earn them an honest living."[40] And musical education remained a constant asset for the diasporic community.[41] Cultural traditions (*opera buffa*) and historical reasons explain why Naples represents the whole South, and why the cosmopolitan metropolis represented Italian popular culture *tout court*. As a cosmopolitan metropolis, Naples, over time, had developed a modern culture industry, whose model was utilized also by the East Coast immigrant stage, not only because of its cultural influence but through direct entrepreneurial relations and through the presence of "birds of passage" migrants who moved back and forth, transatlantically.

Intellectuals, European musicians, aristocrats, and the lower classes shared this taste and identified Naples with opera and song—a cultural creation of immense impact. The Neapolitan song is the composite fusion of popular (rural) traditions with the classical repertoire of elements from *romanza* and *opera verista*.[42] From the nineteenth century, the Neapolitan song constituted the core of a modern culture industry in Naples and New York from publishing to the stage—a process driven by the vitality of classless Neapolitan popular culture.

From commedia dell'arte—the first to admit women on stage—sprang the organization of Italian traveling players into theatrical families and the tradition of the singing actor. The stable structure of the theatrical family encouraged the interchangeability of roles on the stage, with leading ladies or men playing, in time, older characters or becoming company managers in addition to preserving a special ability for improvisation and exchanging roles. Commedia dell'arte also required a basic ability to play an instrument (mandolin, guitar) and sing. The singer-turned-actor in silent cinema (for example, Caruso and Lina Cavalieri), and the singing actor (Anna Magnani and Vittorio De Sica) are part of an Italian tradition that would continue with Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin, reaching all the way to Steven Van Zandt today.

From the late nineteenth century and well into the 1920s, filmmaking in Naples had been a key component in the success of Italian cinema. The film industry in Naples was at the technological leading edge, along with the other important Italian centers in Turin and Rome, and its studios, film publications, and cinema halls were already operating from the early years of the century.[43] Giuseppe Di Luggo's Polifilms built its own studio in Vomero in 1912, while Gustavo Lombardo (who had started a distribution company in 1904 and expanded his operations internationally) launched the film magazine *Lux* in 1909 with a debate on film as art. The adjective *Neapolitan* applied to this cinema may be used to refer to the geographical location of production, but it often coincided with the mainstream national product. The *verismo* of the acting and a liking for a realist mise-en-scène favoring outdoor shooting are frequently seen to be precursors of neorealism, especially in outstanding productions such as the now lost *Sperduti nel buio* (Nino Martoglio, 1914) and *Assunta Spina* (Francesca Bertini, Gustavo Serena, 1915).

Neapolitan cinema was characterized by intense intermedia interaction, combining music, popular literature, and naturalist drama. Most of the Neapolitan film companies were family businesses run by brothers, sons, and wives—as in the example of film pioneer Elvira Notari, who was working with her husband and Gennariello, her son—and each had their set roles and responsibilities.

Indeed, Neapolitan cinema is conventionally identified with the popular product realized by Elvira Notari through her company, Dora Films, based on popular novels and Neapolitan songs.[44] Nevertheless, the film industry could also boast illustrious Neapolitan figures such as Roberto Leone Roberti (Sergio Leone's father) directing Francesca Bertini, Gustavo Lombardo and Count Giuseppe De Liguoro, whose names are linked with mainstream or "quality" products. While the presence of aristocrats among the producers of Italian silent cinema is a characteristic of the national film industry, the Neapolitan reality is interesting because it contradicts the commonplace that the Neapolitan aristocracy was reactionary, eschewing any public role.[45] On the contrary, at the outbreak of World War I, Italian film companies based in Naples produced a series of patriotic films, expressing the upper-class cultural attitudes of Neapolitan filmmakers toward Italian identity, actively participating in the role cinema played in Italy in "*fare gli Italiani*," in creating a national culture. Notari too made a great number of patriotic films.[46] Naples was also home to the most emblematic of Italian patriotic songs, "La canzone del Piave," composed by the Neapolitan author E. A. Mario, who also wrote "Santa Lucia Luntana" and "Tammuriata nera" One could even argue that "'O Sole Mio" is the true Italian national anthem.[47] These Neapolitan expressions of popular patriotism were a binding element in the fragile identity of the recently unified Italian state. This autochthonous metonymic relationship between Naples and "patria," later supported the process of "making emigrants Italian."

Although it would seem a technological contradiction, Neapolitan silent cinema utilized popular songs as both an inspiration for the narrative and as a way of presentation in the theaters with live singers. In 1914, Elvira Notari produced *A Marechiaro 'ce sta 'na fenesta* and pioneer filmmaker Roberto Troncone made *Fenesta che lucive* based on famous Neapolitan songs. Therefore, filmed *sceneggiata*, that is, a dramatic work developed out of the lyrics of a song, was born before the theatrical one, conventionally dated 1919. What southern audiences appreciated in these films was their well-known melodramatic "narratives" and the performance, in the specifics the combination of live and film. Unexpectedly the coming of sound did not produce an increase in this production because these marginal companies could not afford the cost of sound equipment in production as well as in exhibition. Furthermore, censors had long been complaining about the overly realistic representation of degraded sections of the city, the exposition of its *stracci* (tatters) together with the use of dialect. In 1928, the Fascist regime formalized this position in a document that forbade this production as detrimental to the dignity of the city.[48] Having resisted the crisis that affected the Italian film industry from 1923 to 1931, becoming indeed the main producers of Italian silent film between 1924 and 1926, the Neapolitan film companies did not survive the regime's project to clean up Italian cinema and use sound to marginalize dialect and centralize the industry in Rome. While Dora Films and Troncone discontinued production activities, the distribution branch of Notari's company, Dora Films of America, continued to circulate Neapolitan films in the United States. The diasporic community thus continued to watch Neapolitan films throughout the 1930s, at times adding sound to the prints and soon leaving their mark on the Italian American versions of *sceneggiate* and *macchiette*, ensuring in this way a material continuity of this cultural production (see chapter 4).

Gustavo Lombardo had made such a powerful entry onto the national and international scene that in 1928, he set up his own company, Titanus, and soon moved it to Rome. This Neapolitan-born film company would produce several neorealist masterpieces after World War II, and eventually ventured into international coproductions.[49]

Thus, thanks to its stage and music traditions, Naples was still able to play a major role in the construction of a modern culture industry with a "European vocation" in Italy.[50]

The Italian immigrant stage, at the core of this culture, was for a long time a crucial cultural institution within the diasporic communities in the United States, and most of all in New York, where the southern Italian diaspora was most numerous. Immigrant actors held the community together from a linguistic and cultural point of view, while they represented—actually embodied—*Italianità* in the eyes of the outside world. During the silent era some of them reached Hollywood, where they joined other Italian performers from Italian cinema and theater and different regional cultures. Furthermore, music has "always been central to self-representations of Italians in America and their diasporic nation-making. Between 1899 and 1910, musicians represented by far the largest segment of the 'skilled and professional' category of Italian immigrants in New York."[51]

The mobility of Italian performers was as multidirectional and circular as that of Italian migrants. Actors such as Mimì Aguglia or Fred Malatesta were indeed "traveling players" who toured Europe, the Americas, and at times the Italian colonies, performing in prestigious theaters as well as in improvised spaces. As "birds of passage," the mobility of some of these performers was circular, returning to Naples for the theatrical season or for the Piedigrotta festival, bringing with them the new rhythms or formats they had discovered and, on their return to the United States, updating the diasporic audience with new trends from the mother country.

The cultural energy of Italian stage traditions allowed southern Italian performers to emerge even when history—in the form of nationalism and racialized prejudice—was against them; suffice it to mention Enrico Caruso and Rudolph Valentino in the 1920s, whose popularity coincided with the imposition of restrictive quotas on Italian immigration. In the 1930s, when the Fascist regime wanted to transform these "colonial" performers into "Italians abroad," they made their own films in the United States, following the southern Italian stage traditions that Fascism was silencing at home. Even during World War II, when Italy became one of the enemies of the United States, Frank Sinatra became a star—"the Voice." In the 1950s, the many Oscars awarded to Italian and Italian American films and performers reveal the legitimacy achieved by this immigrant community also thanks to the international success of Italian neorealist cinema. In 1954, Sinatra won the first Oscar to be awarded to an Italian American playing Angelo Maggio in *From Here to Eternity* (directed by Fred Zinnemann); in 1956, Oscars went to the American neorealist *Marty* (Delbert Mann) and to Anna Magnani for her American film, *The Rose Tattoo* (Daniel Mann). And today, Italian American performers and creators are prominent across the American media landscape. They have entered history and the American nation, now as white ethnics.

In addition to discussing the racialization of Italians and their gradual “whitening,” a world history approach demands paying attention to gender and class factors. These issues are of particular importance in this account, given the preeminence of Italian male stardom over female stardom, which is practically limited to Anna Magnani and Sophia Loren (who are both attractive southern Italians). Actually, this phenomenon parallels the history of the Italian diaspora, often ignoring the crucial role played by women in Italian migrations. On the contrary, for Baldassar and Gabaccia, “Italianness is often associated with or symbolized by femininity, passionate emotions, or elements of domestic life—the Italian mother, a peculiar ‘Italian’ intensity of family solidarities, the ardor of romantic love, or the pleasure of eating and the table.” They add, “That marking emerged in Italy but was re-elaborated and solidified abroad. Both outsiders and Italy’s migrants contributed to the perpetuation of the notion of Italianness as a national culture defined more by its intimacies than its public expressions of nationalism.”[52] Indeed, the omnipresence of kitchens, mother figures, and family situations in the representation of Italian characters in the American entertainment media has been a constant trait since the silent cinema.

In addition to gender, questions of social class also figure in the casting of Italians in American film, and the negative image of Italians among the “new immigrants” had a marked class component.[53] Indeed, class and cultural differences also emerge from an examination of the careers of Italian performers in the United States: actors who had already made a name for themselves in the Italian cinema (such as Isa Miranda), or had aristocratic origins (such as Albert Conti, Mario Carillo [Caracciolo], and Tullio Carminati), or were part of the upper class (such as Eduardo Ciannelli) were cast in leading roles, whereas performers arriving from the immigrant stage, especially in sound cinema, were mostly used as character actors. Class issues were deep rooted within the immigrant community itself. The *maggiorenti*—the upper class—did not always attend and support the immigrant stage, which they probably considered a lower cultural form.

Mobility, flows, diasporas, migrations, and the indivisible emigration/immigration binomial are different terms used to designate journeys undertaken either to escape a desperate situation or else in search of a better one, or both; a more or less forced journey, but undertaken for personal motives. In fact, this study investigates individual experiences of migration through the performers’ biographies and careers, set against the background of the history of Italian migration. But, as Bender argues, when a group does not belong to “a nation” as is partially the case of southern Italians, it is excluded from the public use of history—from archives and history books, which makes reconstructing their work very arduous. Therefore, this history of Italian traveling players contextualizes the rare biographical information and arid data from filmographies, and roles within the players' personal, multidirectional, or circular journeys also within the history of the Italian diaspora.

Italian performers in Hollywood and the immigrant theater in New York shared an Italian *cultura dello spettacolo*. However, whereas the Hollywoodians and performers from the San Francisco immigrant stage were more generically "Italian," on the East Coast, popular theater, radio, films, and music were rooted in Neapolitan traditions, enriched by intercultural exchanges. "Attuned to the cosmopolitan and intermedial fascination with the picturesque, a Southernist aesthetic traveled," as Bertellini argues, "like its dialectically opposed *Romanitas*, across geographical borders and media forms. . . . It eventually found the most fertile terrain of re-actualization in the small-time vaudeville houses and movie theatres of the Lower East Side, where it matched American nativist prejudices with performances of vernacular authenticity."[54] This dual nature of Italian *cultura dello spettacolo*, both "Southernist" and related to the classical "cradle of the arts" is inextricable and explains the contradictions and oscillations between fame, glory, and prejudice that emerge in this story.

American culture was more than willing to appreciate the expressive use of the body, as in the case of (Italian) dancers, singers, or actors, who were able to use their bodies and their voices not only as products of Nature, but because they had been trained and honed by exercise and art. Culture, art and nature represent two conflicting images: the positive idea of Italy as cradle of the arts versus the negative view of Italians as people. In this respect, Broadhead coined the image of a "touristic-aesthetic conception of Italy" juxtaposed with "the alien-intruder one" of Italian immigration, which accurately depicts the fundamental cultural contradiction that runs throughout this account. In fact, the image of the performer as a fusion of Art and Nature was unstable, embedded as it was in a continuous tension with the historical context—national American and Italian histories and the history of Italian emigration in the United States, which fused a black Italy of southern primitivism with the hegemonic white Italy, "cradle of Western civilization."[55]

In New York, southern Italians created their own cultural and entertainment industry, interacting not only with the American scene but also with diverse cultures. This occurred on stage and in vaudeville with Jewish actors and with African American performers in the musical sphere. The Italian immigrant stage imported the Neapolitan model of a popular and modern cultural industry, relying on a synergy of press, theater, cinema and radio that was more effective and advanced than analogous models in contemporary Italy. With the advent of sound, the issue of language became a pressing one within the nonassimilated community, and since Italian cinema was late in adopting sound, (southern) Italian performers produced their own cinema: three films in Hollywood and twelve on the East Coast, along with many musical shorts acted and sung in Italian, Neapolitan, and Sicilian. Actually, Hollywood was the birthplace of the first film spoken in Italian, *Sei tu l'amore?*, that premiered in Italy before what is conventionally defined as the first Italian sound film, *Canzone dell'amore*. Indeed, the history of Italian performers in America, never included in official national film historiography, could require substantial sections of "*la storia del cinema italiano*" to be rewritten.

Just as Italian immigrants made an enormous contribution to creating the American food industry, producing spaghetti and tomato sauce in order to continue relishing their traditional cuisine and started winemaking so they could enjoy a convivial drink during Prohibition, so too, the immigrant stage community generated a lively entertainment industry. These productions reveal a cultural resistance toward America, in the choice of linguistic and sociocultural nonassimilation—and toward Italy too—by maintaining regional cultures.

In defining the language spoken by Italian immigrants, Herman Haller (*Una lingua perduta*) prefers the definition "Italian American proper" over "Italglish" or "Italo-Americanese," used by other authors, in order to refer to a fully elaborated "Italigish" as opposed to, for example, the occasional use of an English word. Nancy Carnevale proposes instead the term "Italo-American dialect(s)" in part because it better suggests that there were multiple versions of this language. Language use in turn reflected the formation of hybrid Italian American identities in the United States.[56]

By stressing the historical role of the Neapolitan *koiné*, the *lingua franca* of southern Italy, and the scarce presence of "proper" Italian words in the language spoken by Italian immigrants in the United States, it is possible to forge the term *Napolglish*, with its strong southern aftertaste. Indeed, Farfariello's film in Napolglish, and the hybrid Sicilian music of New Orleans developed a diasporic culture with a very smart and modern use of media as well as a visible shade of "blackness."

Exchanges between the American and Italian Cinemas

As already mentioned, in Italy, the stage tradition does not distinguish between theater, music, and cinema, but blends them in the term *spettacolo*, the art of performing. Cinema represents the most visible and widely appreciated product of this fusion from the early silent era when Italian films, together with French shorts, dominated even the American nickelodeon market, as Richard Abel argues in *Red Rooster Scare*.[57] In fact, "[European] market culture . . . in the early twentieth century was still economically competitive, aesthetically formidable, and deeply troubling in its sensuality, social inequalities, and disdain for American 'civilization.'"[58] Indeed, before World War I, when cinema was still in its infancy, Europe still "disdained" American culture, holding on to deep class markers and a firm hegemony over the American screens. "At first the state of the art favored Europe, exploiting the area's rich melodramatic traditions, ingenious optical techniques, the sensational realism of serialized novels, and the rich resources of theatres with their skilled craftsmen and stage actors. Around 1910, France, Italy, and Denmark were the leading exporters."[59] Italy stood out as a prestigious exponent of cinema production, with its spectacular historical pictures on imperial Rome or Christian subjects, and its early star system was made of a constellation of divas: beautiful and competent actresses such as Francesca Bertini and Lyda Borelli, with individualized melodramas constructed around their personalities (and their fashion style). Furthermore, the Italian cinematographers abroad represent one of the excellences of early Italian cinema, both on account of their exceptional professional abilities and the cultural impact of their work. In those pioneering times, "actualities" (newsreels and documentaries) were of a special value, and Italian landscapes were much appreciated as they proposed artistic monuments and natural views. At that time, cinematographers were also projectionists, so when they traveled abroad they would shoot exotic landscapes to be shown in Italy and also show off the beauties of Italy to foreign audiences (as in the case of Gilberto Rossi in Brazil).[60] For instance, in 1911, Turin-based Ambrosio sent cinematographer Roberto Omegna to make documentaries in Argentina (1907), Africa (1909), India, and China. Italian personnel participated in the creation of national film industries and not only in Latin America where there was a substantial immigrant community. Giovanni Vitrotti visited Russia as early as 1909 and collaborated in making a film adaptation of Pushkin directed by Protazanov.[61]

The history of early Italian cinema abroad thus implied an appreciation of Italian culture by international audiences, with film as a modern reminder of the artistic qualities of Italian culture in general and the special abilities of its performers. It not only refreshed the world's memory in this respect, but it also showed the beauty of Italian culture to larger and less elitist audiences. The presence of Italian film companies with distribution offices abroad, their products and personnel (such as cinematographers Omegna and Vitrotti), and their direct contribution to the development of local national cinemas, made Italian cinema a "good object."

The international expansion of Italian cinema coincides with the big wave of Italian emigration: these films probably traveled on the same liners as the emigrants. But the silent Italian cinema depended on the revenue from exports, including the great share of the American market that it held until 1914. This explains its quick decline, when World War I limited its access to the international market (and when film historiography was still in its infancy and therefore did not record the success of Italian silent cinema, favoring its later erasure by the more powerful American national film history).

During World War I, the American film industry collaborated with the government in its propaganda effort through the Creel Committee, gaining special attention in Washington due to the crucial role it could play in the construction of the "irresistible empire"—"the rise of a great imperium with the outlook of a great emporium," as Victoria de Grazia defined this colossal move to conquer the world, imposing "democracy" through consumer culture.[62] In 1918, Congress passed the Webb-Pomerance Act, which gave the American film industry a free hand in foreign markets, lifting antitrust regulations.[63]

By 1916, American film exports to Europe had leapt, now invading European screens. The American strategy succeeded both in Europe and at home, adopting protectionist measures that discouraged importing foreign films to the United States. This is the time when this account begins, with the casting of immigrant actors Antonio Maiori and Cesare Gravina in a top American film production, *Poor Little Peppina*, alongside Mary Pickford.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the United States engaged in the formation of this "empire" that reached its apogee during the Cold War, creating the historical context of cultural/film alliances and wars, which would run transversally through film history. Industrial interests were divided—exhibitors preferred the standardized

Hollywood product, but the national producers defended their local industry, which played a key role in the construction and maintenance of national culture. The European market, and above all the national film industries, reacted defensively to this invasion.[64]

The American film industry infiltrated the entire field of film work. "Securely cushioned by such firm [government] support and rich in capital, the US cinema industry invested heavily abroad from the 1920s, multiplying direct-sales offices, insinuating itself into the cinema establishments of other nations, *wooing talent to come to Hollywood*" (my italics). [65] Several actors, directors, and technicians left Europe and the dire postwar situation of national film industries to work in American cinema. Italians however, were an exception: only a few performers from the Italian cinema went to Hollywood before World War II.

Between 1914 and 1925, American film companies made nine silent films in Italy. Hollywood "went to school" there, shooting replicas of the Italian historical epics with *Nero*, *The Shepherd King*, *Romola*, and *Ben Hur*. In 1914, film pioneer Edwin Porter shot the prestigious *The Eternal City* in Rome—which was remade almost a decade later into a Fascist version of the same novel (even giving a part to Mussolini himself)—and followed by costume dramas with Lillian Gish and Ronald Colman. American studios exploited locations, the work force, and masses of extras, and entrusted key roles to Italian actors; they entertained relations with the Italian authorities (including the Vatican and the Fascist government) and with Italian film companies such as Cines—associations that actually proved more intense than expected or admitted. This filmic Grand Tour in the *bel paese* (beautiful country) has so far been ignored, covering up Hollywood's acknowledgment of Italian cinema as a model, in appreciation of its *cultura dello spettacolo*. But reviews and reports of these American film experiences in Italy also document a deep-seated anti-Italian sentiment, already present in some of the literary sources these films adapted: a cultural prejudice that also fueled an anti-immigrationist sentiment.

Another deep transnational crisis was brought about by the advent of sound, when the Fascist regime imposed dubbing "made in Italy." In the 1930s, when several European stars were taking refuge or looking for better professional opportunities in Hollywood, only two Italian film stars, Isa Miranda and Tullio Carminati, went to Hollywood, confirming again an Italian "film exceptionalism" worth investigating.

In the 1950s, so many Americans made films in Italy that they created a "Hollywood on the Tiber," actually consolidating the reborn Italian film industry and transforming a *Roman Holiday* into a Dolce Vita. This transnational film experience plays an important role in the history of the relationship between American cinema and Italian *spettacolo*, signaling a cultural debt Hollywood has never admitted.

A Force for Change Anchored in Continuity

The Italian immigrant stage maintained a commercially astute interaction between the stage, radio (sponsored by Italian American food producers), and cinema that resisted longer than most ethnic cultures, lasting even up to Woody Allen's *Broadway Danny Rose* (1984). At the same time, they also contributed in a decisive manner to American media production and to the creation of a cosmopolitan Hollywood that now dominates the world's screens. Furthermore, they gradually transformed their liminal stage culture with its southern Italian matrix into an "*Italian-Americanità*," perceived by Americans, and thanks to Hollywood, everywhere else, as *Italianità* itself.

Italian performers were a force for change and transformation: Caruso introduced his *verismo* style of performance into opera and was the first modern media star, able to combine *bel canto* with popular Neapolitan songs—thus contributing to the formation of the "Neapolitan synecdoche," the process whereby Neapolitan culture has come to symbolize the whole of Italy abroad. Caruso had used the new recording technology before reaching the United States and was so competent in using the media that he became an undying myth (see chapter 1). Valentino was a sensual, romantic star, the first to be the object of a fanatical cult (see chapter 2). Eduardo Ciannelli, Jack La Rue, and George Raft were cast as elegant, cold-blooded, at times even ironic gangsters, countering the image of the primitive, violent Italian gangsters impersonated by Paul Muni and Edward G. Robinson (see chapter 5). In the postwar era, a neorealist approach to staging and performing pervaded American family dramas and crime films set in the Italian American community in a challenging rapport with Method acting. However, these two naturalist acting styles emerged from the same tradition, as Stanislavsky had studied Ernesto Rossi, Tommaso Salvini, and Eleonora Duse in order to develop the theory behind his approach to performance—the method—forming the basis of the work of the Actors Studio. Italian films in the postwar period, successfully distributed in the United States, introduced socio-existential issues and sensuality to the American screens. In fact, a small Italian film, *Il Miracolo* by Rossellini, changed the rules of film censorship in the United States (see chapter 6).

Although there is a limited but efficient bibliography on Italians on the American stage and in Hollywood in English,[66] in Italy these performers were not studied: there are a few superficial articles on "Italians in Hollywood," the only well-informed one written by Gianni Puccini in 1937.[67] While Americans considered these performers Italian *tout court*, the scarcity (or absence) of Italian sources indicates that in Italy their immigrant status transformed them into an undesirable cultural hybrid, redolent of emigration and "southernness" and therefore to be ignored. The fact is that most of these performers really *were* southern Italian and this factor, together with other cultural elements, encouraged the American (and international) equation of Italians with southern Italians, contributing to the creation of the "Neapolitan synecdoche." This favors the association of southern Italians with Africa too, problematizing the racial identity of southern Italians, and, as a consequence, the use of these performers. Powerful reciprocal prejudices came into play both in Italy (anti-emigrant, antisouthern Italian and anti-American) and in the United States (anti-immigrant), having a marked effect on their careers and the historiography concerning them.[68]

Despite their large numbers and their many (perhaps small) roles in what amounts to a huge output, "Italians in Hollywood" have rarely been discussed within film history in terms of their contribution in the same manner as "Germans in Hollywood" have.[69] Why not? It may be that their sense of Italian national identity was weak, and most of them really did come from the marginalized South. Yet they did not change their surnames (which reveal their origins) as they were aware that a name ending in a vowel was always appreciated in the world of performance. What united them as Italians in Hollywood was (and still is) their approach to acting: a versatility that allowed them to play all colors, all nations, and all social classes in American films; and Hollywood's flexibility in ethnic casting contributed to diluting their "Italianness." Curiously, these performers rarely played Italian characters, and especially not in silent cinema. The analysis of casts and plots of American silent films reveals that Italian actors often played aristocrats or circus and music artists, or, after the introduction of sound, waiters, while the Italian characters are equally divided between criminals and musicians. These naturalistic versatile performers were all too easily confined within stereotypes. In American silent cinema, female Italian figures were Victorian orphans or vamps, an expression of eugenic fears, because the Italian immigrant family was not yet "visible"; Lina Cavalieri and Tina Modotti were the sole female actors. The Italian family arrived on the screen in the 1930s, with papa Henry Armetta (or Raffaele Bongini in the Italian films produced by the community in New York) and stories that centered on second-generation women, with Cesca (played by Ann Dvorak) in *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932) and the girls in *Santa Lucia Luntana*. In the 1950s, the Italian family dominated ethnic drama, and actresses from the immigrant stage at last enter the scene, to play mamas or old aunts, as in *Marty* or *House of Strangers* (Joseph Mankiewicz, 1949).

Keeping in mind this complex and at times contradictory relationship between actor and character, it is possible to reconstruct a more articulated discourse about Italian identity and Italian culture in American cinema and popular culture, emphasizing the divergence between the rigidity of the Italian stereotype—associated with emotionalism, food, family, music, stilettos and guns—and the versatility of these actors.

The successful contributions of Italian performers to the American entertainment industry entered into the construction of the American imaginary that brought about the "irresistible empire," a role they played unwillingly or unconsciously, immersed as they were in the strategy of ethnic flexibility—the Hollywood "melting pot." However, the social construction of Americanization was partly challenged by Italian performers, not only because of their cultural resistance, but also because of their strong stage traditions that offered them a mark of national distinction, still visible in the credits with their last names ending in a vowel, in addition to their naturalistic interpretations. Eventually an anti-Italian prejudice emerged in the construction of the characters, and indeed the imperial project could not have succeeded outside this fragmentation of character and performer, which overshadowed the problem of ethnicity.

There is a cultural continuity, a *fil rouge* that links Antonio Maiori, the "Salvini of the Bowery," to Al Pacino, in staging and interpreting Shakespeare or that ties Caruso to Madonna: singers transforming into actors. This continuity is confirmed by the participation of Italian American artists in the recuperation of this patrimony, as in the case of *Illuminata* (1998) by John Turturro, staging the colorful world of the immigrant stage, or when Francis Coppola, in the casting of *The Godfather* (1972), enlisted several performers from the Italian theater in the United States or when Martin Scorsese sponsored the restoration of *Santa Lucia Luntana* and Farfariello's *The Movie Actor*. There is even a generational continuity, as in the case of the Coppolas, who continued these traditions, in addition to returning, physically, to Italy, like Sofia Coppola with her film *Somewhere* (2010), where disorientation mixes with a search for roots and authenticity in Italy and gets lost in Milan.

The special qualities of Italian performers have always been recognized and utilized by the American entertainment industry. The time has come to pay homage to the large group photograph of Italian performers in America, perhaps seeking out others who are not yet in the picture.

ONE

Italian Performers in American Silent Cinema

This chapter explores the cultural significance of Italian performers—including opera stars, performers from the Italian immigrant stage, and actors from Italy—and of popular Italian movies to the success and international expansion of American silent cinema.

Antonio Maiori, the "Salvini of the Bowery"

In his 1891 review for *Harper's Weekly*, the theater critic John Corbin described the experience of attending an Italian performance of *Othello* starring the Sicilian-born immigrant performer Antonio Maiori (Messina 1870–Brooklyn 1938).

> The dearth of tragedy that has of late fallen on the Broadway theatres has been indifferently laid to the lack of good actors and to the abundance of ballets and vaudeville shows. It would be perhaps more just to lay it to the lack of a school of tragic acting. . . . The announcement therefore that "Othello" and "Hamlet" were to be brought out in the Italian theatre in the Bowery raised the question which only experience could answer, whether the tragic muse had been brought down from the clouds of ballet girls uptown to live among the men of the East Side. . . . The Italian Theatre, which is just South of Grand Street, is as rude and bare as ever an Elizabethan playhouse on the Bankside—and not noticeably more clean.[1]

He went on to describe stumbling actors, a loud prompter, actresses "quietly awaiting their cues . . . through an aperture in the castle wall"; he also ridiculed the play's mise-en-scène, noting: "The 'Othello' version used was in prose and, as far as I could make out, it was stripped of most of the characteristic Shaksperian [*sic*] passages. . . . The actors spoke mainly in vulgar Italian."[2] Indeed, at that time, it was not unusual to present the classics in the immigrants' own language—German, Russian, Yiddish, Italian—not only in the southern section of Manhattan, but wherever diasporic communities were present. By the nineteenth century, Shakespeare had become part of "a shared public culture" and played a major role in the cultural integration of immigrants in the United States, until the dominant class "sacralized" the bard.[3] The experience of attending a performance of Shakespeare in Italian helped with the "Americanization" of Italian immigrants; it introduced them to American cultural values, while also familiarizing them with standard Italian, because at home, most of them spoke in dialect. "Italianized Shakespeare" entertained and educated immigrants while also attracting American audiences and critics, such as Corbin. As with opera, Americans would go to see a drama despite not knowing the language, simply in order to appreciate the performance. Their presence in a Bowery theater implicitly legitimated Italian culture at a time when Italians were less than welcome in the United States because they were not considered white.

Corbin observed the Italian audience in these terms:

> Our little party from uptown was surprised to find them as much amused by most of the incongruities as we. Yet their laughter was quiet and charitable, and in no wise interfered with their enjoyment of what was enjoyable. They were for most part bootblacks, peanut-vendors, and organ grinders, or at most members of Colonel Waring's brigade; yet it seemed that in the simplicity of their souls they felt the force of the play with more heartiness than one could have expected of an audience on Broadway.

Corbin's picturesque description suggests that the audience was largely made up of Italian immigrants, mostly peddlers—probably an automatic stereotype which may not have sprung from actual evidence in the theater. What surprised the "little party from uptown" was that "in the simplicity of their souls" these Italians had greater sensitivity for tragedy than so-called sophisticated Americans. Corbin continues:

> In the tragic climaxes a part of the gallery would shout with delight, only to be hissed silent by the rest until the rest of the scene, on which all yelled at the top of their lungs. At the death of Desdemona—Desdémona she was properly called—a heavy silence fell upon the house; and when the stage closed on the last act, and all was over, it was plain that there were sad hearts in the audience, and minds turned upon the soberest realities of life.

Apparently, Corbin paid more attention to the noisy spectators than to the show, documenting the entire evening program for posterity.

> But the managers had provided that there should not be too much sorrow. The drop was scarcely down when the sometime Duke of Venice bounded out in a song-and-dance costume and bellowed out a Neapolitan ditty. Then to restore the balance again Cassio

> came out in black street clothes, somewhat threadbare and shiny, if the truth be told, and sang us a sentimental song while we were putting on our coats. Alas for our uptown manners! The simple and kindly Italians did not turn from the delights of the stage until the last mournful cadence was ended.

The typical Italian immigrant theater program would include songs and comic sketches, following the commedia dell'arte tradition, where singing, dancing, and acrobatics accompanied the acting and comedy followed tragedy. This mixed format was not specific to Italian theater. According to Levine, before moving to Broadway, Shakespeare was commonly performed with musical intervals and comic sketches, and with this integration of formats, "Shakespeare was popular entertainment in nineteenth-century America."[4] Corbin's surprised reaction stemmed from the fact that he and his "little party from uptown" were no longer used to these popular forms of representation, as his comments on the shabby scenery confirm. His reaction to this performance documents a transformation at the level of cultural hierarchy as well as class distinction in performance venues.

After all the picturesque details, it was indeed the Italian actors' abilities that struck the reviewer, who lavished praise on Maiori for his remarkable performance.

> When I saw the setting of the stage, I admit, I had my doubts. Yet the total effect was good—incredibly good. And those who saw the "Othello" of Antonio Maiori could not fail to be impressed with the fact that a dramatic illusion has no necessary relation to the scene painter and the stage carpenter, and that a touch of vital art transcends all limitations.
>
> Of the quality of Maiori's acting it is not easy to speak without suspicion of exaggeration. . . . It is also possible that his manner owes much to the elder Salvini [Tommaso]. Yet the fact remains that he played throughout with genuine intelligence, with simple dignity, and with conviction. In the scene in the Venetian council-chamber his presence was fine, and his manner full of repose; his delivery was quiet and impressive. His voice is rich and flexible and strong, and he does not overwork it. . . . In the scene where he strangles Desdemona his passion rose to a height that was magnificent; and afterward the despair that clutches at the heart was genuinely terrible. When all was over one felt that he had been face to face with Shakespere's [*sic*] tragedy in a way that could not have been, except for Madame Modjeska, in any other theatre this season in America.[5]

Corbin greatly appreciated Maiori's performance, likening it to the tradition of the *grande attore italiano* represented by Tommaso Salvini,[6] de facto inaugurating the definition of Maiori as "the Salvini of the Bowery," reprised by American critic Owen Kildare and other critics.[7] Tommaso Salvini had been a very influential actor in the history of world theater. He toured the United States extensively between 1873 and 1889, in addition to performing in Europe, Latin America, Egypt, and Russia, where he impressed Konstantin Stanislavsky, who took inspiration from his performance of Othello to elaborate his aesthetics of naturalistic acting that laid the foundation for the Method—adopted fifty years later by the Actors Studio.[8] Stanislavsky also studied and appreciated Adelaide Ristori, Ernesto Rossi, and Eleonora Duse who had toured the Western world. Even in the days of ocean liners (before airplanes) Italian actors (as well as singers and musicians) traveled extensively, putting on shows not only in Europe but also in the Americas (including Cuba, Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil).

In quoting Salvini (while misspelling Shakespeare), *Harper's Weekly* showed just how much the Italian *cultura dello spettacolo* (culture of performing arts) was appreciated across the Atlantic, recognizing its merits and its potential to rejuvenate Broadway. After the show, Corbin interviewed Maiori: "He is now twenty-eight. At the age of nineteen he was already playing leading parts in Naples and Rome. When the time came for him to serve in the Italian army he had either to leave Italy or abandon all he had achieved in his art." This biographical reference to Italian compulsory military service highlights an important factor in the lives of male Italian performers: failure to serve in the army or to return to Italy in the event of war would have led to them being considered deserters.

According to Aleandri, Maiori was born into a middle-class family near Messina, in Sicily. He worked in amateur companies and in southern France as a mime and dancer, before being hired by Ermete Zacconi for his prestigious theater company (fig. 1.1). He moved to the United States in 1890 and performed in the Hanlon Bros.' production of *Superba*, with Kiralfy as ballet master.[9] These shows were spectacular pantomimes with grandiose stage machinery, music, ballet, and various types of performances, more in line with Maiori's experiences in France than with Zacconi and the legitimate stage, which remained his objective. According to Kildare, "His first opportunity came during the squabble over the Irving Place Theatre. . . . While the German managers were fighting he took possession of the house and played there several months." At that time, the struggle among different communities for theatrical spaces in the Lower East Side was intense, placing the theater as a key platform for the socialization, acculturation, and entertainment for immigrants. Ethnic conflicts as well as interactions played a crucial role in the formation of diasporic cultures, particularly on stage. Kildare added: "To form his stock company he had to send to Italy for actors, as then no dramatic talent was available here. Among those who came, Pasquale Rapona, his present partner, Giuseppe Zacconi, the father of Italy's greatest actor at present, Ermete Zacconi." Given that Maiori does not appear in any Italian history of theater, it is impossible to cross-reference these actors' arrivals from Italy, but the company he formed was indeed the first on the American stage to be made up of professional Italian actors engaged in a classic repertoire.

THE ITALIAN COMIC-DRAMATIC COMPANY

In 1902, the immigrant stage in New York was made up of amateur companies performing drama, music, and vaudeville in the Italian language or the local dialect. *Teatro Italiano* (Italian theater) did not necessarily imply that all the performances were delivered in standard Italian; instead the actors, especially in comedy, often spoke dialect and the transition to English was slow. Maiori joined forces with another popular performer on the immigrant stage, Guglielmo Ricciardi (Sorrento 1871–Naples 1961), and formed the Compagnia Comico-Drammatica Italiana. Ricciardi had risen to fame in 1897, when he played in *Tragedia di Bartolomeo Capasso* by Edoardo Pecoraro, one of the first dramas written by an Italian immigrant about a homicide on Mulberry Street. Based on the real event, it dramatized

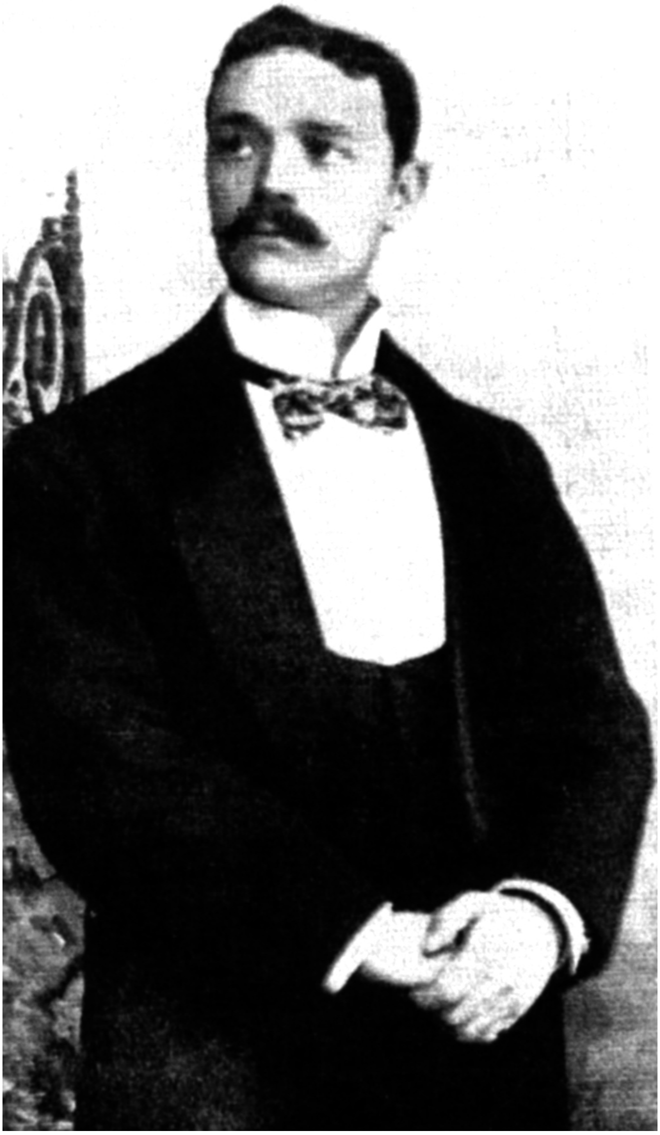


Figure 1.1. Antonio Maiori in New York (ca. 1906).

the facts so effectively that the audience "forced author Pecoraro and actor Ricciardi to improvise another act on the trial of Capasso's murderer on the spot."[10] As historian Anna Maria Martellone notes: "The ability to improvise was one of the qualities needed by Italian-American actors performing to working-class audiences who participated intensely in the action (as they did in the home country, attending farces, *sceneggiate* or *macchiette*), delivering comments and jokes to the performers, making noise, applauding, disapproving, and even asking to change the ending [*finale*] of a drama if deemed undesirable."[11]

Lively interaction between players and the audience was typical of the Italian theater in the United States. The audience appreciated performers not only because of their ability to interpret a role but also because of the way they represented the community. Theater companies put on shows that mixed traditional theater with literature, music, circus, cinema, and journalism. The Maiori-Ricciardi Company produced works by immigrant writers such as Alessandro Sisca (nom de plume of Riccardo Cordiferro), who wrote several dramas set in the Italian immigrant community, including the popular *L'onore perduto* (Lost honor). The play showed the impact of a financial crisis on a family, when the weight of debt forced a woman to betray her husband for a *possidente* (a rich and powerful man). The play raised a debate over the concept of honor, not questioning the value in itself but the issues it triggered within a different culture.

The Compagnia Comico-Drammatica Italiana included past celebrities such as Giuseppe Zacconi and was the training ground of future Italian American stage personalities such as Clemente Giglio (later an important entrepreneur of Italian stage, radio, and cinema productions in New York), Silvio Minciotti and Ester (Esther) Cunico Minciotti, and Eduardo Migliaccio, whose stage name was Farfariello. But Maiori and Ricciardi soon parted ways when Concetta, Ricciardi's wife, left him for Maiori. Embittered, Guglielmo Ricciardi abandoned the company and returned to Sorrento for a couple of years. When he returned to the United States, he formed his own Brooklyn-based company, performing *macchiette* and vernacular farces as well as the classics.

Another factor contributing to the rift between Maiori and Ricciardi was the question of language. Inspired by the success of Alessandro Salvini (Tommaso's son), performing in English on the American stage, Ricciardi grasped the financial opportunities that Broadway could offer and decided to learn English. In 1903, he Americanized his name from Guglielmo to William. The problem of language, and thus of national identity, was complex for first-generation immigrants, especially for performers who had to use dialect to communicate with most of their compatriots (Maiori also performed in Sicilian) and Italian if they wanted to be appreciated by the *prominenti*, the Italian leading class in New York, and to show respect for the language of the classics. Yet, if they were to communicate outside the community, they needed English too. Most performers developed three linguistic competences, but the various dialects and "Napolglish" dominated comic *arte varia* shows, while standard Italian was reserved for Shakespeare and the classics.

In addition to the classics from the national, vernacular, and European traditions, Maiori's company also staged modern Italian dramas, premiering Gabriele D'Annunzio's *La figlia di Jorio* in 1904. That same year, the company offered a mega production in six acts of *Quo Vadis*, with eleven changes of scenery and a masked ball in full Kiralfy style, undaunted by the length of the performance and the variety of content.

As highlighted by Kildare, Maiori's repertoire was vast: "There is no actor today who has a longer repertoire. He has the complete works by Shakespeare by heart. Near all of Sardou's dramas he can rehearse without looking at a prompt book, and he knows not only one role, but all roles." Interchangeable casting, the ability of Italian actors to play different roles in the same performance, a circumstance favored by the structure of the family company, explained their special gift for versatility.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Antonio Maiori had become a favorite among the New York elite, the Four Hundred as they were called, who ventured to the Bowery to see him perform the classics in Italian. In 1902, another more numerous “party from uptown” attended one of his performances in Little Italy, because “Mrs Havemeyer and her friends considered him the greatest tragedian in the world.”[12] Perhaps to avoid the discomfort of the Bowery theatre, this special audience encouraged Maiori to hold future performances on Broadway. Yet, reported Kildare, there was a problem: “Maiori . . . speaks little English, and he says that he shall never attempt to learn it well enough to act in it. ‘Acting,’ says he, ‘is not merely saying words. It is uttering them so that they can express all the meaning of the situation and circumstances, and this I could not do were I to try and do it as a mere parrot. Besides, one should act with his whole being—the arms, the head, the body. Everything, not the voice merely.’” Maiori—along with his Italian colleagues—was aware of the importance of the body when acting, and not simply in terms of a repertoire of conventional gestures. Expressive use of the body is a quality that has consistently been a strength of Italian performers. In any case, learning English would not be enough as the cultural barrier was far more complex than the linguistic one.

Although language barriers kept Italian performers confined to performing in Little Italy, their work reached audiences beyond the Italian community. They not only interacted (albeit intermittently) with the WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) middle class but also with other ethnic groups, especially the Yiddish community which was characterized by a similarly deep-rooted (popular) theatrical tradition. Maiori, for instance, performed in *The Merchant of Venice* “in competition” with the famous Yiddish actor Jacob Adler, with whom he later took turns playing the part at the Grand Theatre in the Lower East Side, using the same scenery and costumes.[13] Thus, the Italian and Jewish communities intersected not only on the same territory, in the Lower East Side, but also in a cultural sense. In 1907, Maiori produced Shakespeare at the Royal Theatre in Brooklyn together with the Jewish future film exhibitor and producer Marcus Loew, who had just launched his chain of nickelodeons—popular five-cents-a-ticket entertainment venues screening films.[14] This was a time when cinema, music, theater, and vaudeville mixed, often in the same venues, creating a fusion of knowledge and techniques, both transcultural and multimedia.

In the early 1900s, immigrant audiences began to show less interest in the classics of theater, having discovered alternative forms of entertainment. The small profits yielded by the Italian classics discouraged companies from specializing in this sort of repertoire. The alternatives for Maiori were to return to Europe, to tour Latin America, or to move uptown (and learn English). Kildare aptly sets out his dilemma:

> Maiori’s plans for the future are not settled. Some months ago he had an engagement to play with Duse in Paris and in Germany, but she changed her plans before he crossed the ocean and returned to Italy, whither he could not follow her without being liable to military service. . . . Maiori is now planning to leave for South America where Italians are stronger numerically, and are not so familiar with alien tongues and with up-to-date vaudeville as to prefer other theatres to their own.[15]

In the end, Maiori insisted on promoting his project of a *teatro di prosa* (legitimate theater) in Italian and collected funds to build his own Italian theater in New York, but his attempts were unsuccessful. Even American journalists resented the fact that the *maggiorenti*, the upper strata of Italian immigrants, did not help Maiori to pursue his project (paying scarce attention to the Italian immigrant stage). This lack of interest was due to class differences and prejudice against southern Italians, because these theaters were mostly populated by recent immigrants from the south. The class division within the community weakened it and slowed the process of cultural and social legitimation for southern Italians in New York.

Given his middle-class origins, Maiori wanted to be identified with the *teatro italiano*, not with the increasingly popular immigrant stage in New York, so he decided to try his luck in San Francisco.

Whereas the wave of immigrants who came to New York, Chicago, and Boston in the 1890s was mostly from southern Italy, California had a more varied Italian population.[16] Unlike in New York, the southern Italian *cultura dello spettacolo* was not dominant in San Francisco. With numerous Tuscan members, companies often spotlighted Stenterello, a popular character in commedia dell'arte, who would improvise ironic comments on the events of the day in Tuscan dialect, which historically represented the model for standard Italian in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation. In 1909, the first stable *teatro italiano* opened in Washington Square, seating one thousand people. Its packed program had a lineup of drama, comedy, vernacular plays, music, and opera, and regularly hosted major Italian companies from the mother country or New York.

When recounting Maiori's experiences in San Francisco between 1910 and 1912, Lawrence Estavan emphasizes his role in promoting "the highest tradition of the *teatro di prosa* in America . . . his company in San Francisco had no singers, no dancers, no comedians. . . . Maiori simply produced legitimate drama he made no compromise with public taste—and he created a new high level for the Italian theatre."[17] In this context, Estavan also confirms the company's incredible range of repertory: "The period between 1910 to 1912 in which the Compagnia Maiori played nightly, with a complete change of program every night, was the highest point ever reached by the Italian theatre in San Francisco. . . . They performed Dumas, Goethe, Schontau, Sudermann, Sardou, Shakespeare, and others, besides native Italian dramas." The variety of works, together with nightly program changes distinguished Italian theater from all the others. This versatile repertoire implied stability: Italian companies were not organized around a single project but worked together, day in and day out, within a flexible and loyal group. "Some [of these dramas]," Estavan writes, "demanded a large cast of characters to play two, three, or sometimes even four parts in a single play. For an Italian this is not as difficult as it sounds." He provides the example of one of Maiori's favorite roles, Kean:

> This play has seventeen characters and five Acts. . . . Maiori's casting of this play is very significant. It reveals the Italian principle of doubling-up in roles; it also reveals the secret of the homogeneity of the Italian company. . . . [Estavan explains how the Maiori company consisted of three families.] This intermarriage of players, traditional in Italian theatre, explains the remarkable homogeneity of Italian troupes. Children and grandchildren generally followed in the footsteps of their forebears. The same role was often passed down through the generations. Successive intermarriages strengthened the troupe's cohesion, often a patriarchal group headed by the father—the leading actor, the *capocomico*.

In fact, Maiori's family would represent the tradition of Italian American theater for generations, interacting with other theatrical families such as the Aguglias, the Minciottis, and the Giglios and leading the way to the peculiar genealogical continuity of Italian performers within American entertainment today.

Estavan also confirms Maiori's continued involvement in productions of Shakespeare's plays: "Shakespeare found an important place in the repertoire of the Maiori Company. There was at least one 'Italianized' version of Shakespeare performed each week. In the course of their season at the Washington Square, practically all of Shakespeare's works were given. The favorites with the Italian public, quite naturally, were those with Italian themes or Italian settings." However, despite Maiori's efforts, by 1915 the popularity of Italian dramatic theater began to dwindle among immigrant audiences, forcing him to also venture into *arte varia* (vaudeville) programs.

FROM STAGE TO FILM: *POOR LITTLE PEPPINA*

In 1916, Maiori accepted a role as a servant and a Mafioso in the film *Poor Little Peppina* (directed by Sidney Olcott) along with the famous star Mary Pickford, who plays an American child kidnapped by the mafia. The film was a prestigious production—the first six-reel feature where the actress had a share in the profits. One can therefore suppose that she carefully monitored all aspects of filming, from the plot to the production values and casting.[18]

The film magazine *Motograph* (March 4, 1916) noted the absolute novelty of the casting of this film: "For the first time in the annals of motion pictures, several Italian actors, who are residents of New York, appear in characterization of their own nationality in *Poor Little Peppina*. . . . Among the Italian actors appearing in support of Miss Pickford are Cesare Gravina, Antonio Maiori, Ernest Torti, N. Cervi and Francesco Guerra." Maiori's wife, Concetta Arcamone, also was in the cast.

Although the names of Maiori (and his "Mrs.") and Gravina appeared prominently in the opening credits, from a narrative perspective, their characters—two mafia bandits operating both on the Amalfi Coast and in New York—represent one of the most obvious negative Italian stereotypes.[19] These two *mafiosi* interrupt the domestic idyll of the American family in Italy by kidnapping a baby for revenge and reaching the United States on an improbable sailing boat, thus embodying the prototype of the alien and disquieting intruder. The film portrays them as "ugly Italians" yet presents the farming family who rears the girl as warm but unable to resist pressures from the Mafia or a *padrone*. However, it does depict a beautiful Italian backdrop: an open-air landscape, seaside, and wheat fields where peasants work and pray, in a composition evoking the painting "The Angelus" by Millet, with careful lighting effects, contrasting Italian sunshine with the dark images of New York. Realistic shots, showing the interiors of a peasant's house, with a fireplace and garlic garlands, or Peppina's engagement party where she is wearing a meticulously reconstructed southern Italian costume, recreate a credible image of Italian peasant life. There is substantial investment in décor and cinematography, underscoring the image of Italy as the *bel paese* (beautiful country). Their roles allowed for a close view of Maiori's and Gravina's features and appreciation of their acting style, which differed remarkably from that of their American counterparts. They embodied the naturalist tradition of southern *verismo*: Maiori used vernacular gestures when threatening Peppina's father, while Gravina played a mean *mafioso*, even more menacing on account of his irregular features.

It is bitterly ironic that American silent cinema featured a Shakespearean Italian actor such as Maiori in the role of a *mafioso*. And yet his casting as a "bad guy" is redeemed by the prestige of the film that rests both on the choice of star and on the evocative mise-en-scène to which he may have contributed. Being a director and impresario, Maiori was therefore able to supervise the sets and costumes, and since *Peppina* is far more accurate in this respect than other contemporary films with an Italian setting, it is possible that Maiori may have made a significant contribution from this point of view. The two actors may also have coached Mary Pickford, teaching her how to dance the *tarantella* and make characteristic hand gestures when asking, "What do you want?" Under the influence of the two Italian actors on both acting and visual presentation, the film initiated a qualitative leap toward realism in the American filmic representation of Italy and Italians.[20] The coexistence of diverse acting styles in the text documents the "melting pot" in which American silent cinema performances developed, with a more active mediation by the theater than usually argued in film history.

Poor Little Peppina presented an American star and Italian characters played by Italian performers, paying attention to (if not respect for) Italian customs and culture. The "contamination" of "American sweetheart" Pickford with *Italianità* nonetheless required caution. In the film, she plays an ambiguous character: a rich American child living in Italy who, after being kidnapped, is brought up by an Italian peasant family. Peppina (Mary Pickford) keeps strong family ties with those who adopted her, especially her protective Italian "brother," played by Pickford's own brother, Jack. And yet the happy ending restores her privileged (and racial) roots thanks to the help of a young American man. Her character is Italian in terms of education and behavior, but American in blood—a good narrative device to allow an American star to appear in the clothes of immigrant Peppina without actually embodying an Italian.

The part of Soldo in *Poor Little Peppina* was Maiori's first and only American film role. Given his reputation on the early Italian immigrant stage and the appreciation American audiences accorded him as a *grande attore italiano*, it seems surprising that Maiori's brush with the cinema has been absent from both American and Italian histories. Until World War I, American cinema, which then was still produced and shot in New York, often looked at Little Italy's immigrant theater for talent and inspiration. Later, when the film industry moved to California, it would be the Italian theater in San Francisco that supplied Hollywood with performers.

After this experience, and as the immigrant stage had now abandoned the classics, Maiori slowly segregated himself and for a time even went back to Italy, where he found work in a couple of Neapolitan films.[21] In 1927 he returned to New York. Although his personal acting career was over, Maiori remained active in the Italian community in the

United States, through his company and by sponsoring the institution of the *Lega di Miglioramento fra gli Artisti della Scena*, founded in 1933. On August 2, 1938, an obituary announced that "Funeral services for Antonio Maiori, 69, Shakespearean actor and producer, founder of the Italian Theatre in America and vice-president of the Federation of Italian Actors, will be held . . . in Brooklyn."[22]

Maiori had a vast repertoire and his company was versatile yet homogeneous—a typical Italian theatrical family. While representing core Italian traditions, his involvement in both US and intercultural experiences testified to the close interaction among contemporary theatrical cultures until the birth of the movies, which challenged the role of the spoken word on stage in favor of the more universal language of silent film. And yet, the very fact that his fame vanished completely, never reaching Italy, where he remains unknown, is symptomatic of the problems that affected his career: the lack of support from the *maggiorenti*, his privileging traditional theater when it could no longer be played on the immigrant stage, and his ignorance of other languages, which prevented him from working on Broadway or touring Latin America. The "little party from uptown" would only visit him at the Bowery theater once in a while, in a way using this rapid Grand Tour to picturesque Little Italy as a substitute for a real exotic voyage, never forming a regular American audience. And yet Hollywood's secret love affair with Italian immigrant performers started with Antonio Maiori.

"The Italian theatre continued to serve the same functions: entertaining its audience, educating them to the best literature of Europe, raising money for worthy causes, perpetuating Italian culture and providing a forum for socializing with other members of the immigrant community."[23] Additionally, it produced accomplished participants in the performing arts in the United States.

Italian Opera Stars in American Silent Cinema

Because of its (low) position in the cultural hierarchy and its orientation toward a dynamic narrative, early American cinema had little interest in enlisting famous theater actors. The Motion Picture Patents Company—a group of American film producers that had licensed Edison's patents and produced most American films in the early 1910s—did not even disclose the names of film performers. After World War I, when the independents had taken over the leadership of the American film industry and began to conquer international markets, they started developing their own star system, already in place within European cinemas, hiring "famous players" from the stage and opera.[24] Famous Players-Lasky, for instance, enlisted the most cosmopolitan stars of the time: opera singers.[25] As sound was not an issue, film producers chose opera stars for their ability to perform, possibly for their physical appeal and their popularity but, above all, for the legitimacy they could bestow on American cinema. At first, they used opera singers in "operatic films," that is, films that adapted famous operas for the screen. For example, Natalina "Lina" Cavalieri (Viterbo 1874–Florence 1944), together with Lucien Muratore, appeared in *Manon Lescaut*, a prestigious American six-reel picture produced in 1914—one year before Geraldine Farrar's well-known film debut in Cecil B. DeMille's *Carmen*.

LINA CAVALIERI, SYMBOL OF THE INTERNATIONAL BELLE ÉPOQUE

Lina Cavalieri was perhaps best known for her beautiful features and her sensual exuberance on stage (for instance, when she kissed Caruso after the *Fedora* duet at the Metropolitan) than her voice. She performed in New York but commuted regularly to Italy. In her home country, she made two (minor) films, *La sposa della morte* (1915) and *La rosa di Granata* (1916), both directed by Emilio Ghione.

Between 1917 and 1918, Famous Players-Lasky signed Cavalieri to appear in four modern dramas: in *The Eternal Temptress* (Emile Chautard, 1917), Cavalieri plays the Venetian princess Cordelia Sanzio, a sort of Mata Hari who seduces a young American during World War I but in the end, guilt-ridden, kills herself in his arms; in *Love's Conquest* (Edward José, 1918), she plays the role of Gismonda, Sarah Bernhardt's *piece de résistance*—written by Victorien Sardou; in *A Woman of Impulse* (José, 1918) she portrays the daughter of an Italian lacemaker and studies singing thanks to the generous support of an American couple; and in *The Two Brides* (José, 1919), she is the daughter of a Roman sculptor, torn between the love of two men. Cavalieri's American films are thus evocative Italian diva films—flamboyant melodramas inhabited by aristocrats, musicians, and artists—in which she comes across as a seductress or vamp. As Bram Dijkstra brilliantly argues in *Evil Sisters*, in American popular culture and silent cinema the vamp expressed a fear of and fascination for foreign women as well as the aggressive sensuality of the modern woman.[26] Cavalieri's film characters resemble her: they are Italian and have to do with culture, music, and seduction. In fact, as Richard deCordova notes, the strategy of building a "picture personality" implied using some off-the-set elements from the performer's life (nationality, profession, temperament) in creating the fictional characters.[27]

Together with Tina Modotti (discussed later in this chapter), Lina Cavalieri was the only Italian female performer who played Italian protagonists in American silent cinema. Interestingly, all of the greatest American female silent stars played at least one Italian character in their career—usually a poor orphan girl (Lillian Gish, Mary Pickford) or a dangerous femme fatale (Theda Bara, Greta Garbo). This discrepancy between the performer's nationality and that of the film character runs throughout all silent cinema and masks an anti-Italian prejudice by not combining the (problematic) ethnicity of the actor with that of the character. As an international star, Cavalieri managed to evade this unwritten rule.

Cavalieri, like Enrico Caruso, entered American cinema as a celebrity. Their films—made in the same period (1917–1919) and directed by the same filmmaker (Edward José) and written (except for *Manon Lescaut*) by the same screenwriter (Margaret Turnbull)—were produced by Famous Players-Lasky. As in Maiori's case, the studio's strategy took advantage of her preexisting popularity in high culture. Opera is one of Italy's most popular cultural exports, and Italian singers were always welcomed in the United States. A singer's performance reconciled two otherwise conflicting aspects of the image of Italians in the United States: Culture and Nature. This is particularly true in the case of Caruso, renowned for the natural qualities of his voice and the disciplined techniques he used to train it.

ENRICO CARUSO, THE FIRST MODERN MEDIA STAR

A conventional biographical sketch of Enrico Caruso (Napoli 1873–Napoli 1921) would naturally center on the usual rags-to-riches narrative: humble origins, exceptional success which made him rich and famous in every corner of the world, turbulent sentimental relationships, a benevolent presence in Little Italy, and moments of authentic drama. Instead, here attention is given to the modernity of his profile, focusing on his key role in bridging high- and lowbrow culture and in the development of mass media.[28] Throughout his life, Caruso proudly remained both Italian and Neapolitan even after becoming a New York celebrity and a cosmopolitan star.

In his book *The Opera Singer and the Silent Film*, Paul Fryer states: “Enrico Caruso, one of the greatest singers ever to be heard on an operatic stage, was also indisputably one of the first great international media stars and one of the most influential.”[29] The Caruso legend is based on the special qualities of his voice, his naturalist performance style and his personality, but he also played a crucial role in the development of modern entertainment, in the birth and growth of the recording industry, in the relationships of the press with celebrities, and in the creation of the star system.

Caruso’s career began in Naples, where he started singing in church and performed popular songs in cafés.[30] At twenty-one he made his opera debut and became a famous tenor at La Scala. He toured Latin America, Europe, and Russia and was appreciated for the *verismo*, the special naturalism, of his interpretations.[31]

Caruso was one of the first tenors to record his voice, in April 1902 in Milan.[32] As music historian Marsha Siefert notes, “Caruso’s voice was the perfect blend of the most desirable technical and cultural aesthetics.”[33] It was his voice that transformed a medium still associated with typewriters or talking machines, into a technology that transmitted music. The advent of the gramophone introduced him to a global audience while he was still performing in Italy, and it was precisely because he could be heard on record that he was signed by the Metropolitan Opera.[34]

Caruso made his successful New York debut in November 1903; his contract with the Metropolitan lasted for seventeen years. New York offered him a wide array of media exposures, including a contract with Victor Records. According to Fryer, “His contribution lifted the gramophone, in one single move, from everyday entertainment to the most important development in the presentation of opera and music to a worldwide audience.” Furthermore, “the Victor Company was selling not just recordings but status, an entry into the life styles of the rich and famous, for only $2.”[35] Therefore, while Caruso’s records, sold under Victor’s prestigious Red Seal label, brought opera out of the opera house, they kept a cultural hierarchy in place, since these records were sold at a higher price than contemporary songs. Caruso was the first artist to sell one million copies of a record (*Vesti la giubba*). From 1904 to 1920 he earned an estimated $1,825,000 from recording activities.

He was also the mainstay of Victor's advertising, featured in colorful and well-designed campaigns, wearing his Metropolitan Opera costumes to confirm that the record could be a substitute for the real experience, thus democratizing opera consumption.

But it was the press that turned Caruso into a public figure. With his outgoing personality, it was easy for the international press to exploit the "human interest" aspects of his life and career, with impressive coverage of his travels, lifestyle, family, and even his practical jokes. He actively participated in the process by having his own drawings and caricatures printed in the papers.[36] These caricatures were not in the least amateurish and revealed the tenor's warm sense of humor. His lesser-known sculpting skills, captured at the beginning of the film *My Cousin* and through the small artifacts he sculpted as presents for his colleagues, are kept at the Metropolitan archive.

The rich collection of Caruso's photographs at the Metropolitan not only documents the opera roles he performed but reveals a growing command of his own public image. He was "one of the most frequently photographed personalities of his time." Photos of Caruso also appeared in advertising, mainly to promote Victor's Red Seal series of recordings. He also advertised musical instruments, clothing, food, and even cigarettes.[37] His image had another unexpected appearance in the press: in comic strips. The Caruso Collection at the Peabody Institute contains two such strips by George McManus for "Bringing Up Father," in which Jiggs refers to Caruso's voice: the strongest possible confirmation of his wide popularity.

But the US press was not always kind to the Italian tenor. In his early years in New York, he was involved in the "scandal of the zoo."[38] On November 17, 1906, some papers reported that he had been arrested and charged with "disorderly conduct" for molesting a young woman in the Monkey House in the Central Park Zoo. The *New York World*'s headline was "Caruso Collapses under Disgrace of Arrest in Zoo." The "scandal" was most likely a set-up. In fact, according to Caruso's Italian biographer, Pietro Gargani, New York newspapermen were unable to locate the woman who had accused him, and she never appeared in court. Moreover, the policeman who arrested him was later tried for false testimony in another case. But the court found Caruso guilty and fined him $10. Perhaps Caruso's well-known interest in the opposite sex had been exploited either with the intent of blackmailing the tenor or, as Puccini suggested, as "a put-up job by some hostile impresario."[39] Regardless whether he molested the woman or not, the matter was so serious that the US press hinted that it might be necessary for him to leave New York—possibly the true objective of whoever was behind this "scandal."

However, both the Italian community and his colleagues were very supportive. On November 28, Caruso appeared at the Metropolitan as Rodolfo in *La Bohème*; his entrance on stage was greeted by explosive applause, from the orchestra to the gallery: the public's reaction was a standing ovation. That day also marked record ticket sales, so the scandal that could have destroyed Caruso's career actually consolidated it. As the media were quick to discover, scandals are profitable, and the public's genuine affection for the singer became another equally marketable sentiment for the press.

The zoo scandal symbolically expressed anti-Italian attitudes both through the association with monkeys—frequently used to depict Italians—and with the suggestion of an excessive sex drive. On other occasions, the US press would use the smell of garlic as a less aggressive but similarly prejudiced connotation of Italianness.[40]

Caruso's name is still synonymous with "Italian opera" worldwide. Caruso's Italian repertoire, his lengthy contract with the Met, and his travels around the globe reinforced the association of opera with *Italianità*. Indeed, Italian opera, with its melodies, popular drama and fusion of singing with instrumental music, constitutes the staple of the genre.

Caruso had another significant cultural impact in music because his recordings of Neapolitan songs bridged the gap between upper-class opera listeners and the far wider popular music audience. He was not the first and only opera singer at that time to record popular songs, but he recorded Neapolitan rather than Italian songs. Arguably, Neapolitan songs could be considered Italy's true popular music, but Caruso's choice also served to legitimize southern Italian culture, and—by extension—Little Italy. He was indeed a vital part of this community, generously supporting immigrant families in need, refusing to pay the criminal organization known as the Black Hand,[41] and entertaining friendly relations with performers of the Italian immigrant stage. Titles of his Neapolitan repertoire include "Core 'ngrato" (Ungrateful heart), written in New York by his friend Cordiferro (the previously mentioned Alessandro Sisca) and Salvatore Cardillo in 1911, when the singer was coping with the pain, jealousy, and humiliation resulting from being cheated on by his companion, Ada. And it was from the immigrant stage in Little Italy that he recruited a few friends to support him in his film debut.

CARUSO AND SILENT CINEMA

> I played to the camera as if it were 6,000 or 7,000 people. . . . In my singing, . . . I have to make my impression in a language, which is not known by most of my audience. That I keep them interested is surely due to something besides my voice. In the opera I sing foreign words, but I make them understand by my acting. In the movies I do not sing at all, yet they understand me just as easily.[42]

Caruso's participation in silent cinema is more intensive than one might expect and includes not only the fiction films *My Cousin* (1918) and *The Splendid Romance* (1919, now lost), both directed by Edward José, but also newsreels, prompted by his extensive traveling or documenting his daily life with his Italian sons and his American wife, Dorothy, and their daughter, Gloria. He also made comic home movies that stemmed from his personal interest in technology. He even participated in early experimentations with synchronized sound (although no actual footage exits).[43]

In 1918, Jesse Lasky of Famous Players-Lasky offered Caruso the notable sum of $200,000 for two films to be shot at the Artcraft studios in New York. Photos of the making of the film document the presence of immigrant actor Cesare Gravina on the set, as a "personal film trainer" for Caruso.[44] Gravina's presence on the set (together with Guglielmo Ricciardi's participation in the film) documents the osmosis within the performers community of the Italian diaspora: musicians and actors, the opera star and the local celebrities of Little Italy.

In *My Cousin*, set in Little Italy, Caruso plays a dual role, as Tommasso [*sic*], an Italian immigrant sculptor, and as his cousin, the great singer Caroli.[45] The film uses several elements from Caruso's real life. In his role as the cousin, he is a *figurinaio*, who crafts plaster ornaments and sculptures—one of the most common occupations for Italian emigrants around the world (fig. 1.2). Since Caruso's skills as an amateur sculptor were not widely known, the presence of this trait in the characterization suggests his own involvement in the construction of the character. As the tenor Caroli, he is shown drawing his famous caricatures, thus evenly dividing his true artistic abilities between the two characters. In the opening credits, Caroli (Caruso) appears in the costumes of his most famous roles, bowing to the audience and looking into the camera. Carolina White, a soprano at the Metropolitan, plays Rosa, and Caruso's personal secretary, Bruno Zirato, plays Caroli's secretary. In addition to utilizing Caruso's own desk and car in the decor, the scene in which Caroli prepares for *Pagliacci* was shot in the singer's actual dressing room at the Metropolitan, and he dons his own costume for Canio. When Caruso plays the cousin, the film's action takes him to Little Italy, with on-location shots of Mulberry Street and Feddi's real "Plaster Ornaments and Casts" shop. Guglielmo Ricciardi, Maiori's "rival" and a personal friend of the singer, who often sang *macchiette* parts in duet with him, played the restaurant owner.[46]

Caruso's naturalistic film performance is exceptionally modern, especially if compared with the style typical not only of opera but also of silent cinema. He interprets the two characters in two ways, using aspects of his own personality: whereas the sculptor is shy yet also warm and humorous, the tenor is authoritative, elegant, bored with fame, and self-ironic.[47] *Variety* (November 29, 1918) wrote, "Besides being a great tenor, Caruso also shows that he is no mean comedian. . . . The star is revealed as a master of facial expression. His countenance is a mask which obediently registers every variety of feeling." Throughout the film, he shows humor, spontaneity, and warmth, surprising most film critics: "With skills and grace that were nothing short of amazing, the great tenor yesterday negotiated the distance from the operatic stage to the motion pictures screen. . . . Caruso can act; yesterday's audience cheered his film work with enthusiasm that robbed that subject of any doubt. But above the revelation of his pantomimic talent there was projected through the camera lens the essence of that personality that makes the man something more than just a great singer."[48]

Caruso's film adventure started under the best auspices. The Caruso Collection at the Peabody Institute includes an unsourced clipping, entitled "My Cousin-Caruso," illustrated with refined sketches in which journalist Charles Gatchell refers to a visit to the "big, barn-like studio of the Famous Players" during the filming. On set, the journalist caught some carpenters "saying in a low voice, 'Why, they say he'll clean up a quarter of a million out of these three or four pictures.'" *My Cousin* represented not only an exceptionally well-paid film debut but also was intended to mark the beginning of a conspicuous film career. Director José told the journalist he was quite impressed with the tenor's qualities: "You can see for yourself how amiable, how enthusiastic he is. . . . Also, you will have noticed for yourself that he is a real actor" (fig. 1.3). The article, however, promoted the misleading expectation that *My Cousin* would offer a chance to experience Caruso as a singer: "So, you who have heard reproduced the golden tones of the great Caruso, who is still in the height of his fame—you, who have dreamed of some day seeing him back of the footlight,

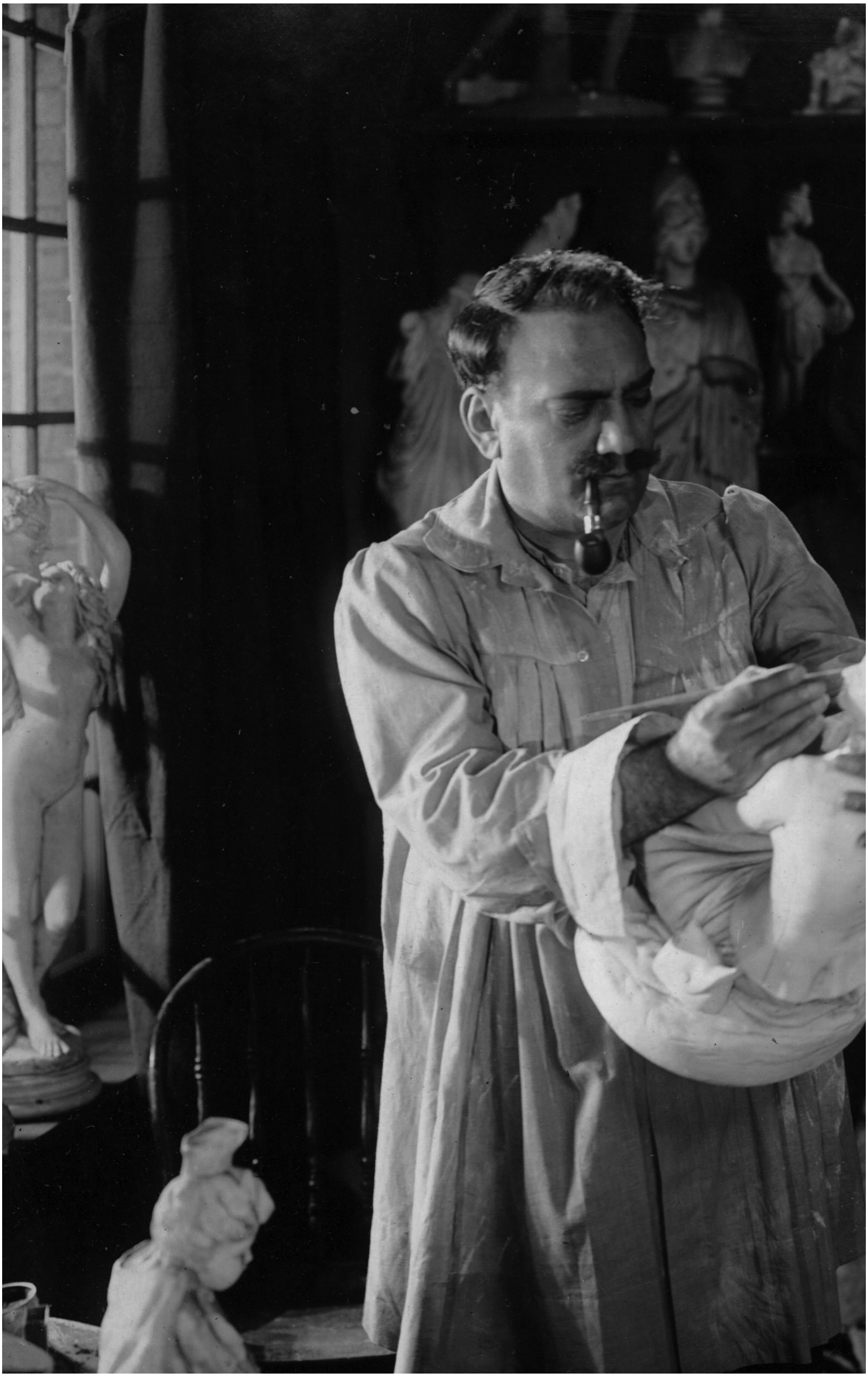


Figure 1.2. Enrico Caruso in *My Cousin* (1918). (Courtesy of the Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins University.)

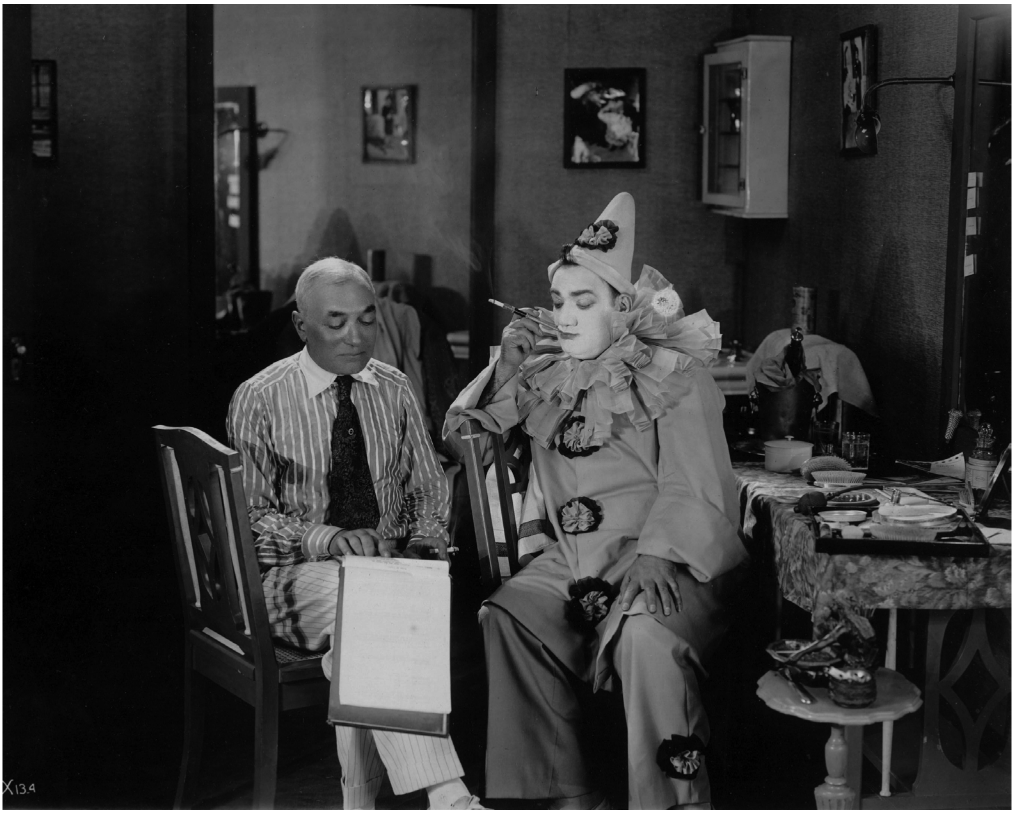


FIGURE 1.3. Caruso with director Edward José in his dressing room at the Metropolitan. (Courtesy of the Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins University.)

get ready your dime or quarter!" But the film was the story of the immigrant cousin, not of the singer, and his voice would not be heard at all.

After the premiere, the *Harrison Report* stated that Caruso possessed "the skill of a Remarkable Actor," and the *New York Times* wrote that "Caruso's accomplishments are many and his personality just naturally pervades the scene." And yet *My Cousin* proved to be a commercial failure and is rarely even mentioned in Caruso's biographies. It was withdrawn from circulation—as Lasky claimed—because otherwise the producer would have "had to refund rental money to many complaining exhibitors."[49]

A true historiographic mystery surrounds this good film that was considered a failure and is presented today as little more than an "extra" in a documentary about Caruso. Any reconstruction of how events may have unfolded is necessarily hypothetical, based on the valuable collection that the singer's American wife, Dorothy Benjamin, had donated to the Peabody Institute and which was the source of the exhibit *Starring Enrico Caruso* in Bologna.[50]

On August 20, 1918—the day of his American wedding—Caruso took his wife, Dorothy, to a private screening of the finished film—indicative of the great personal investment in his new acting experience.[51] According to the American Film Institute (AFI) Catalog, the film's official premiere was announced for October 20, but it was postponed due to the "influenza epidemic," and *My Cousin* was released on November 17, 1918. This date shift—for an event that was very likely eagerly awaited by the public—was accompanied by two "novelizations" in the specialized press: in the one published in *Moving Picture Stories*, the names differ from those in the film and the narrative is more melodramatic; in the other, published in *Picture Play*, the characters have the same names and the storyline is the same as in the film, but without its humorous touches.[52]

The first novelization juxtaposes Mario with Bombardi as two jealous and equally violent rivals, presenting Rosa as flirtatious, and all the characters as immigrant peasants, with a prejudiced view of Italian Americans, even in the wording of the text. *Picture Play* instead summarizes the plot of the film as seen today but emphasizes negative connotations and a stereotypical evocation of Little Italy: "In the narrow street below the children were gathering in a small circle around the organ-grinder"—an image not present in the film, shot quite realistically on location. Rosa's hand is repeatedly described as a "brown hand" although the performer in the film is the very white Caroline White. The recurrent association of Italians with monkeys (and bananas) surfaces in the description of Tommasso making a "monkey's face at the customer." When Tommasso threatens Lombardi in the novelization, he "shook a fist. . . . Nevertheless, the threat was regarded as somewhat in the nature of a Black Hand warning." The scene on film does not suggest a menacing situation, let alone a Mafia warning. In addition, it was widely known that Caruso had rejected paying off the Black Hand and made enemies by his attitude: to associate him with the criminal organization was particularly unfair. This novelization represents the narrative plot accurately, but it unearths stereotypical connotations: perhaps this prejudiced reading of the film was inevitable in 1918.

Early reviews picked up on the different shades within the two characterizations, and yet still extracted stereotypical connotations. In *The Motion Picture World*, Louis Reeves Harrison praised Caruso's interpretation.

> The most interesting feature of Caruso's two impersonations is the view he gives of what is known as temperamental in human nature, himself one of the most illustrious examples on earth. His strenuosity [*sic*], its emotionalized support, his weakness of purpose under slight discouragement, his lapses into gloom and indifference, then the reactions with their tremendous appeal of ardor, native feeling and strength, these constitute a revelation worth watching, for they are plainly true of the great artist himself. As the poor cousin, he is a weaker and more charming self, sensitive, impressionable, impetuous, a man easily moved by sympathy, jealousy and anger, amiable and magnanimous one moment, suspicious, hostile and despairing another, and all this is most carefully maintained in contrast to the great artist at the zenith of success, cynically humorous, bored by those who come to him for help in their hopeless attempts at a career, weary of empty plaudits, yet of unspoiled dignity and sweetness, the whole constituting one of the most remarkable revelations of character ever shown on the screen.[53]

While nowadays most critics would disagree with the definition of Caruso as "temperamental," the description of the characters makes them appear somewhat unpleasant. Prejudice toward Italian performers—emotional, temperamental—always lurks beneath the surface of appraisal.

Therefore, for Caruso's screen debut, Famous Players-Lasky devised a representation of the Italian as violent and jealous, quite an insulting stereotype for anybody taking pride in their Italian origin, as Caruso did. It seems that parts of the film were shot again after promotion for *My Cousin* had been prepared using pictures of Caruso as Mario without a mustache, but in the new sequences, there was greater focus on the character of the immigrant. The story was still a drama, as confirmed by the still of a furious Caruso brandishing a knife. Perhaps it was Caruso himself, unhappy with a film that bore more than a trace of anti-Italian prejudice, who "proposed" shooting parts of the cousin's segment again, when the first novelizations were already circulating. With his instinctive sense of what the public wanted, he created a more congenial self-image as an Italian, transforming the original drama of jealousy into an everyday story of immigrant life. In the film, rather than showing off his qualities as a dramatic actor, he worked on naturalism—his characteristic and more innovative trait on the operatic stage. He privileged the role of Tommasso, transforming his original violence into jokes: instead of threatening his rival with a knife, he makes faces at him, or has his young assistant make fun of Lombardi at the vegetable stand. These comic touches allowed Caruso to show a side of his personality that opera, for obvious reasons, did not allow him to reveal: his humor (fig. 1.4).

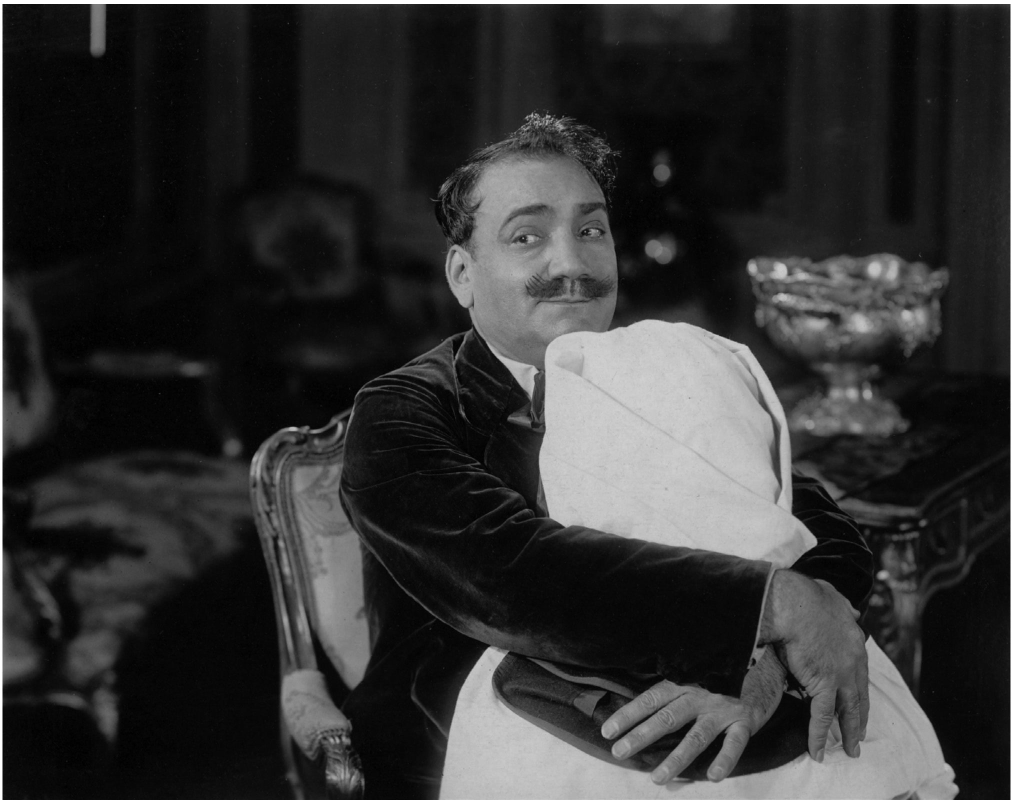


Figure 1.4. Caruso as the immigrant "cousin." (Courtesy of the Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins University.)

If Lasky considered *My Cousin* a failure, the mistakes were all his: from the storyline to the film's promotion. Because it was a silent movie, he could not exploit Caruso's magnificent voice; he would have done better to invest in Caruso's exceptional gifts as an actor, instead of casting him in a drama full of stereotypes. Nowadays, the prevailing explanation for the film's lack of success is that "the public was not interested in a voiceless Caruso," and that the film's advertising had created false expectations. In a crucial segment of the film, shot at the Manhattan theater (standing in for the Metropolitan), an elegant audience sat at an actual performance by Caroli (Caruso) in his most famous role, Canio in *Pagliacci*, where he sang "Vesti la giubba." The sequence included different moments from the opera, but with such fragmented editing that it could not be synchronized with a recording of the aria, despite the best efforts of a creative exhibitor. The value of the scene remains, offering a close up of Caruso singing; but he could not be heard, to the inevitable frustration of any audience. *My Cousin* was neither an "operatic" film nor a drama (highbrow); it was a sentimental comedy (lowbrow). The promotion should at least have warned the audience that they would see a different Caruso, not the Metropolitan opera star.

The confused unfolding of this promotional campaign attests, on the one hand, to the uncertainty behind the early star system that was still not fully developed at Famous Players, and on the other, to the tenor's understanding of how the media work and his attempt to control them. There are deeper cultural issues behind the unexpected commercial failure of Caruso's film debut. The second version of *My Cousin* had more to do with the experience of Italian immigrants than with that of the famous singer, but it was the tenor at the Metropolitan that the American middle classes wanted to see, and this was the audience Lasky had hoped to attract by hiring opera star Enrico Caruso. Yet he failed to see how best to use the tenor's Italian identity as an asset rather than an obstacle.

The unsuccessful distribution of *My Cousin* made it harder to distribute Caruso's second, and now forgotten film, *The Splendid Romance*. Publicity stills and a novelization provide evidence that the film was actually shot, but, according to Fryer, it was never shown in America; perhaps being distributed only in Europe and Latin America. A surviving novelization from the *Motion Picture Magazine* indicates that this melodrama had quite an improbable plot with wedding-day crises, elopement, a riches-to-rags and rags-to-riches storyline, ending with a hackneyed lesson in the value of true love.[54] The almost absurd vicissitudes of the protagonists in this story contain some references to Caruso's stormy sentimental life, in particular his notoriety as a womanizer and his turbulent relationship with Ada Giachetti. She, a soprano, was older than Caruso and already married when they met, but she became the mother of his two (Italian) sons. She left him, jealous of his professional success and tired of his many affairs (including one with her own sister[55]) and ran away with their driver, who rewarded her by stealing her money. Sweet and understanding Mary recalls Dorothy Benjamin, the young American woman from a well-to-do family whom Caruso married. The film not only represented its star in terms of his worst aspects as a man but meanders along in a confused and almost amoral plot. *The Splendid Romance* (originally *Prince Cosimo*) was distributed in 1920 in the United Kingdom. Unexpectedly, reviewers defined it "a very charming film from first to last, [that] provides full opportunity for the inimitable Caruso to disport himself. He is really a most consummate actor . . . possessing a fund of sly humor which is at times irresistibly comic."[56] Quite a generous comment, considering the low quality of the script. If *The Splendid Romance* was not distributed in the United States, it was through no fault of Caruso's, as his performance was more than adequate. Responsibility lay with the lack of awareness displayed by Famous Players-Lasky—the studio that supposedly invented the American star system—in the delicate task of turning him into a film star.

FROM ITALIAN TO ITALIAN AMERICAN

In the closing shots of *My Cousin*, Caroli (Caruso) drives to a street *festa* in Little Italy decorated with both Italian and American flags, pointing to the interaction of the two identities in his life in 1918. The sequence shows the famous Italian tenor boosting his cousin's standing in the community by appearing in his car on Mulberry Street and "acknowledging" (in a form of *anagnorisis*) his relative (and thus his origins, his family); but if he has this power, it is on the strength of his American success, symbolically represented by the luxurious car. As a media star, Caruso honored the values of American society of the day: money and success. Like many other Italians abroad, when he reached New York, his regional identity probably came first: he "felt" above all Neapolitan. But in New York (and in Latin America), he took an active part in the life of the Italian immigrant community, bonding closely with his *compatrioti*, as both *La Follia di New York* and Argentinian newspapers amply document. As opera represented high culture in the Americas, Caruso's identification as "the Italian tenor" reminded audiences that he (and, indirectly, Italian immigrants) belonged to a culture with ancient roots in the arts and encouraged immigrants to assert their national identity. World War I, a conflict deeply rooted in nationalism, marked a turning point in the relationship between "Italians abroad" and cultural identity. (In practical terms too, Italian male immigrants were obliged to return to their home country and fight in the Italian Army or be declared deserters.) Whether it was on account of the nationalism that inflamed Europe or simply his loyalty toward Italy, or the fact that his son Rodolfo was serving in the Italian army, Caruso publicly displayed a strong sense of patriotism from the very start of World War I which also became a manifestation of loyalty and gratitude to the United States. He started collecting illustrations and war propaganda art from newspapers, filling four huge scrapbooks preserved at the Peabody Institute, indirectly documenting a personal quest to be informed about the issues behind the war—especially nationalism. He became a very active fundraiser after America's entry into the war in April 1917 and appeared in a benefit gala in New York with Frances Alda and Sarah Bernhardt, singing with a chorus of five hundred people.[56] At the Metropolitan, he advertised war bonds, exhorting the public to buy them during curtain calls. At a Liberty Bond drive at Carnegie Hall in April 1918, Caruso sang his own composition, "Liberty Forever." He also recorded George M. Cohan's "Over There" for Victor in July 1918, and the record became a bestseller.

Throughout the war, he appeared in benefits to support the Italian and American Red Cross, sharing the stage with other opera singers, as in the event at the Metropolitan on June 10 with Giovanni Martinelli, John McCormack, Hipólito Lázaro, and Cavalieri's husband, Luciano Muratore, anticipating the performances of the Three Tenors. Just before the Armistice, Caruso sang at an open-air benefit concert at the Long Island racetrack, attended by more than one hundred thousand people, concluding a performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in front of newsreel cameras. These mass benefit concerts were a new media event, involving huge audiences for a nonmusical cause and taking opera out of the theaters. For Caruso and Italian immigrants in general, 1918 was a special time when they could blend their identities as Italians and "adopted Americans," precisely as happens in the finale of *My Cousin*.

In Italy, Caruso's image overlaps with that of the emigration crisis, with a vein of nostalgic sadness, expressed through the very Neapolitan songs that gained him popularity with all social classes. Despite being married to a rich American girl, and his great American success, both artistic and commercial, his unequalled cachet, and incredible international fame in the earliest days of mass communications, his figure remains as melancholic—almost tragic—as his death. In 1920, Caruso developed lung disease. During a performance at the Brooklyn Academy of Music he coughed blood, soaking his handkerchief. Nonetheless he went on singing. Following surgery, he decided to return home for treatment, but he died in Naples. He received a solemn funeral in Italy, with a procession of tens of thousands people, while his American friends celebrated him in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York.

Caruso performed a complex cultural task that went well beyond his popularity, confirming the identification of opera with Italian singers and composers worldwide and presenting a positive icon of social mobility to those immigrants who had avoided assimilation and remained within solid Italian cultural perimeters. His naturalistic acting style was modern, as was his relationship with the media, which suggests a call for a reexamination, in his name, of the (southern) Italian contribution to the culture of modernity.

Mimì Aguglia, "a hundred demons in a little body with an angel face"

Mimì (Gerolama) Aguglia (Palermo 1884–Los Angeles 1970) left Sicily very young with Giovanni Grasso's company, bringing her art to European capitals, North Africa, and North and South America. Versatile and intense, Aguglia embodied the southern tradition of the *verismo* (realism) school. Her impressively long career took her from the provincial and vernacular theaters of her native Sicily to the international stage.

> L'Aguglia, The Actress of a Thousand Faces, had a magnificent vitality and an extraordinary versatility. For many years she travelled constantly all over Europe and America. She played in everything, from the most austere tragedy, to the sprightliest comedy and she performed in four languages—Italian, French, Spanish and English. . . .
>
> Audiences had flocked to see her, composed mainly of people who did not understand Italian; but so universal was her appeal, so eloquent her gestures, facial expressions and vocal intonations that her performances had no need of translation. She reminded the critics of Duse, Réjane, Bernhardt; and they marveled that one so young . . . could have achieved so much in her art.[57]

While for Carl Van Vechten, William Brady, and Daniel Frohman she was "the greatest contemporary actress,"[58] authoritative Italian sources such as the *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo* diminish Mimì Aguglia to the status of *attrice dialettale* (literally, a vernacular performer) and emphasize her vaudeville activities.[59] The disparity between the Italian and American sources confirms the varied perceptions of actors like her on both sides of the Atlantic. While Americans related their work to European (high) culture and to Italian stage traditions, Italian theater critics, negatively influenced by these performers' "emigrant" experience, ignored their work abroad, keeping a conservative upper-class attitude, elitist in its anti–southern Italian prejudice and opposed to popular and vernacular culture.

One shared opinion, however, was an appreciation of Aguglia's Mediterranean, and yet modern, beauty: her dark deep eyes, raven hair, and strong physical magnetism (fig. 1.5). Short and minute, she was nonetheless very intense on stage, "a hundred demons in a little body with an angel face," as Italian novelist Edmondo De Amicis defined her.[60]

In sketching her biography, one should be especially cautious with American sources, which were often provided by the artists themselves or by their agents.[61] In addition, Aguglia's extensive traveling complicates the chronology of the career of the most "transatlantic" Italian performer of them all. She was born into a theatrical family, literally on stage, but sources differ on the social class of her parents. According to Estavan, her mother was a countess and her father a middle-class choir maestro, but Sicilian theater historian Vincenzo Privitera doesn't mention any aristocratic origins.[62] Regardless, she was born into a theatrical family, grew up in one, and later formed her own.

Aguglia started performing in her parents' company at the age of five; by age twelve, her talents enabled her to support the family and the company. Starting in 1901, Mimì and her younger sisters Sarina and Teresa performed as singers mostly in Naples and environs. These activities confirm the versatility of this (southern) Italian performer, able to sing,

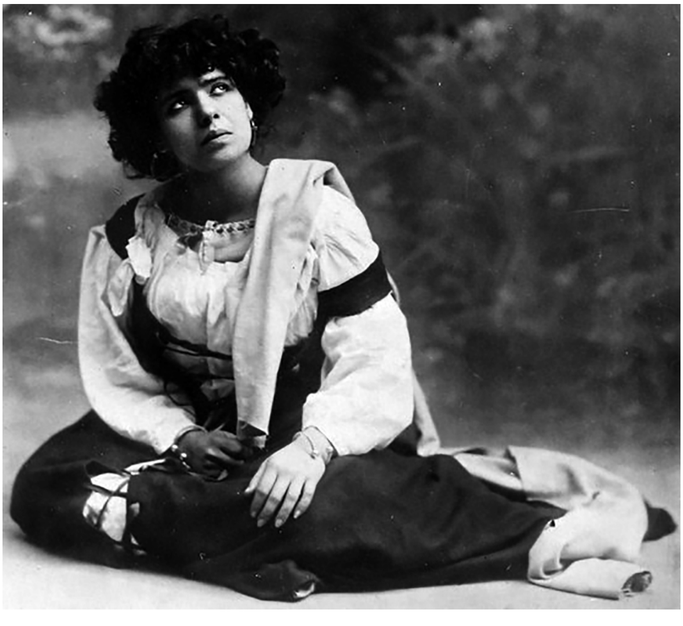


Figure 1.5. A young Mimi Aguglia in Luigi Capuana's *Malia*.

dance, and act not only in comedy but also in drama, and to do so in Neapolitan, Sicilian, and Italian. She was once arrested in Salerno for singing an obscene song—an event not uncommon at that time among vaudeville artists in Catholic Italy.[63] It would not be the last time Aguglia would face censorship problems, as she had a penchant for being provocative.[64]

At twenty, Aguglia became the leading lady of Nino Martoglio's prestigious company, animated by key figures from the realist tradition such as Giovanni Grasso and Angelo Musco (fig. 1.6). The company's repertoire included *Cavalleria rusticana* and *La Lupa* by Verga, *Zolfara* by Giusti Sinopoli, *Malia* by Capuana (her most famous early role), and a Sicilian adaptation of D'Annunzio's *La figlia di Jorio*. Southern realist theater gave her international exposure: she performed with Grasso in Paris and London, where she played *La figlia di Jorio* for the royal family. Scandalous and exotic in her emotional excess, Aguglia enjoyed an impressive commercial, as well as critical, success in Britain. She then traveled to Spain, Cuba, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, where she became a theater star.[65] For these performers, transatlantic travel implied touring both the Americas, visiting areas with strong Italian communities, delighted to be able to see dramas performed in their language. She also played to international audiences, always attracted by an Italian name on the billboard. She also acted in Spanish, which explains her popularity in Latin America, together with the cultural affinity between Italian and Latin culture as well as the more favorable social position of Italian emigrants in South America.[66]

After their magnificent tour in Argentina, the Aguglia-Ferraù company was invited to Peru. The Peruvian president even sent a special train to make sure they would travel

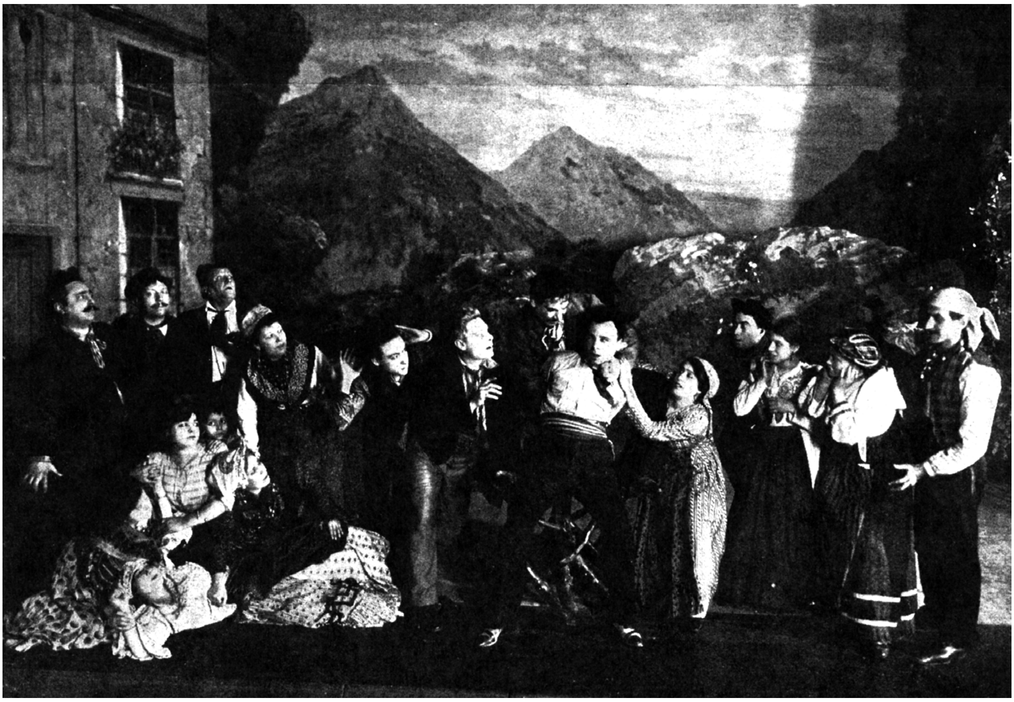


Figure 1.6. Giovanni Grasso's "Sicilian Players" with Mimi Aguglia performing in *Malia*.

comfortably from Buenos Aires to Lima, passing through Bolivia.[67] Inevitably, the train evokes the image of *La Carrozza d'oro* (Jean Renoir, 1952), the special golden coach that the Peruvian Viceroy donated, in the film, to Camilla the Italian commedia dell'arte actress, played by Anna Magnani (with whom Aguglia would later appear in *The Rose Tattoo*).

Back in Europe, an article entitled "The latest theatrical sensation: The Sicilian Players" reported her successes in Paris and London (1907).[68] On the strength of her popularity, "for a tournée in Germany, Austria and North America she was offered conditions similar to those given to Duse."[69] (The Aguglia-Duse association is as recurrent as that of Maiori and Salvini.) Aguglia's first appearance in New York (1908) with the Grasso Company was soon followed by a contract with the powerful impresario Charles Frohman.

Although a truly international star, she was constantly defined as a "Sicilian actress" by American newspapers. As Estavan writes, "Solely and completely a Sicilian actress, all nerves and passion, a *volcano*—full of the fire of the native Sicily."[70] This statement confirms the typical association of southern Italians with a volcanic nature: full of fire—spectacular, but mortally dangerous. Sicilian was indeed the first language Aguglia performed in; her colleagues on stage were also Sicilian, as were the authors who wrote the plays (Giovanni Verga, Nino Martoglio, Luigi Capuana, and later Luigi Pirandello). But the term *Sicilian* never seems to merely specify her geographical origins. In the reviews, the adjective was charged with cultural connotations, masking an anti–southern Italian bias, especially in relation to Aguglia's realist performances.

> Signora Ferraù spares nothing in the portrayal of sexual passion, the representation of which she carries to the extreme limit permissible in stage work; and not even in the too much discussed scenes in Granville Barker's Waste have the inmost workings, both physical and emotional, of a woman's nature been shown with such startling, breath-catching and uncompromising realism as in this fine actress' assumption of the role of Jana in Luigi Capuana's Sicilian drama *Malia*. . . . Love, jealousy, and homicide here again combine to form the theme of a grimly impressive, if crude and repellent play. Giovanni Grasso, Mimì Aguglia and Signor Lo Turco, and their other associates in a company noted for an admirable ensemble, succeeded in giving a perfectly intelligible picture of the unchecked elemental passions of the Sicilian peasantry.
>
> Signora Aguglia displayed well her gifts of facial play and expressive gesture as an emotional actress. Jana, who is, as portrayed by the leading lady of the Sicilians, but a little virago and spitfire at best, reveals the depths of her nature in act two. . . . The girl, who is supposed to be possessed by an evil spirit, alternately prays to and blasphemously reviles the image of the Virgin. . . . The girl has a violent fit of hysteria, in which she grasps, wriggles, and squirms upon a chair, uttering inarticulate sounds; then, her sexual instincts overcoming her, she ardently clings to and presses herself against Cola.[71]

Realism, emotion, passion, expressivity, gestures, physicality, nature, excess, volcano, and the "love, jealousy, and homicide" triad associated with *Sicilianità* obsessively recur in reviews of Aguglia's work, which were laced, in the first part of her career, with more than a trace of aversion. (Excessive sensuality or physicality, pathological jealousy, and primitive religiosity would haunt for a long time the image of Italian women in the American entertainment media.) A 1909 article in *Stageland* by Charles Dranton commented on the work of the “Sicilian players” in *Malia*.

> As an exhibition of volcanic feeling, explosive utterance, and electric gesticulation, their achievements excelled anything hitherto seen. . . . The repertoire of the Sicilian players, . . . was made up of peasant plays, the plot turning in every case to jealousy, revenge, murder, or sudden and violent death. [In “Malia,”] the fight between the two, in which the whole crowd of peasants became involved, brought out in full force the tempestuous violence of the Latin nature. . . . The excess of emotion, the violence of the baser passions, with an almost complete absence of any intellectual appeal became almost nauseating.[72]

Italian New York critic Giuseppe Cautela rightly identified the contradictory attitudes of WASP culture toward *Sicilianità*, which at the same time fascinated and repulsed with its exotic and disturbing emotional excesses; people flocked to witness it yet were ready to detach themselves from its intensity.[73] US racial prejudice was no doubt nurtured by some “guilty pleasures.”

Exploring theater magazines, it would seem that in Britain and the United States the category of the “Sicilian performer” was distinct from that of the “Italian actor.” Aguglia herself embraced this difference, not only as a Sicilian but also as a Sicilian *woman*. “We people of Sicily are carried away by our emotions,” she argued in a 1908 interview with the *New York Times*: “We have not learned repression, and we are not ashamed of the great primal human emotions, the love of man for woman, or father for child, of husband for wife. . . . There is no ‘woman question’ in Sicily. . . . We live in sunshine—with the brightness of sunshine life is different somehow. It is shorter and quicker, and emotions are more strong. . . . The women there are happy, and large families are the rule.”

In tandem with Tina Modotti, Aguglia is a key female figure among the first generation of Italian traveling players. Her comments on the condition of women reveal the transcultural transformations of a young actress who had left southern Italy to tour Europe and the Americas. Although she appears under her husband’s name in the previously cited *New York Times* interview, “Signora Ferraù,” the company she would soon direct was in her name and included all her family members—husband, brother, sisters and their children, as in the tradition of the commedia dell’arte.[74]

According to the *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*, however, Aguglia’s first performances in the United States did not attract a huge audience. Dranton’s article on the Sicilian players reported that “the Italian colony fails to back them up.” Probably the “Sicilianness” of the performers—as in the case of Maiori—was unwelcome to the *maggiorenti*, and drama was not popular enough among the lower strata, who were more interested in vaudeville.

“In Havana and Mexico instead her successes were sensational,” reports the *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo*.[75] Subsequently, the Aguglia-Ferraù Company toured Europe, “culminating with a command performance for the Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria. . . . Again the critics reported that her interpretation of ‘Hamlet’ was better than most men in that role.”[76] Like Sarah Bernhardt, Aguglia enjoyed playing masculine roles such as Hamlet or Giannetto in Benelli’s *Cena delle Beffe*, as a contrast with the passionate southern heroines, generally associated with her fame.

From 1910 onward, her international company broadened its repertoire to perform more "legitimate Italian" theater, but they never completely abandoned Sicilian works. This "Italianization" coincided with a mounting wave of nationalist sentiment in Italy, linked to the country's colonial aspirations. In fact, according to Aguglia's daughter:

> The Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs soon contacted my father and was able to convince him that it was our patriotic duty to help Italy spread its glorious culture in North Africa. My mother and father finally agreed to perform for a week in Tripoli, after assurances that the Italian government would provide adequate safety and support for the company. For the entire week we performed Nino Martoglio's now famous Nica. The audience, mainly Italian immigrants along with their families, were very enthusiastic.[77]

The "Sicilian players'" colonial adventure confirms Mark Choate's argument regarding the interaction of colonialism and emigration in Italian history and emphasizes the role of Italian theater in building a national identity both in the Mediterranean colonies and in the transatlantic "little Italies."[78] Aguglia's path crossed colonialism and emigration, and from this perspective, her move away from purely regional culture toward assuming a conscious role in propagating Italian culture as a whole was significant.

The family troupe left Italy for the Americas again in 1913, the peak year of the Italian diaspora. In New York, Aguglia performed both within the "Italian colony" and on Broadway.[79] In an article saluting her return, David Warfield still emphasized Aguglia's Scilian origins, but also observed developments in her style:

> If acting is a form of hysteria, then Signora Mimì Aguglia is the greatest actress in the world today. . . . In the South of Italy, the drama means more to people than it does in the US. In Sicily, . . . tragedy is the favorite dramatic bill of fare of the public, and the more realism, the more horror that a dramatist can put into his plays, the greater their popularity. After winning triumphs in Paris, Brussels, London, Vienna, Berlin, Spain, Portugal and South America, she now returns to this city after an absence of five years determined to convince us of her art. She has developed wonderfully since she played at the Broadway Theatre under the management of Charles Frohman. . . . The provincial melodramas of the old days she has cast aside for the standard modern tragedies, and she challenges comparison with Bernhardt, Duse and the other great tragediennes of the day.[80]

Leaving Warfield's prejudiced description of Sicilian theater aside, it is interesting to hear Aguglia's own description of her next role, Salome, speaking to the journalist in French: "Salome was crazy. . . . She is a victim of a hereditary taint: a perfect type of degeneracy." The actress stressed the "degenerate" aspect of Salome, verging on the hysteria that she knew how to interpret so well. This was in line with her past work, as the opening of the article suggests, but by speaking in French, the focus shifts to her new international dimension. She explained that she had taken lessons in preparation for the dance scenes; what she did not say was that her "dance of the seven veils" would end with her appearing naked. Pictures and reviews reveal her *Salome* as a modern, Art Deco version of Wilde's text. This performance however, was not destined for Broadway but for the less ambitious Comedy Theatre in Brooklyn, in a double bill with another show. And yet she received rave reviews.[81]

In July 1914, Aguglia traveled to San Francisco, where the Italian stage was still quite amateurish. Her repertoire for the week at the Cort Theater included a different (and engaging) play each night: D'Annunzio's *La Figlia di Jorio*, Sardou's *Fedora* and *Odette*, Sam Benelli's *La Cena delle Beffe*,[82] *La dame aux Camélias*, and "her" *Malia*. According to Estavan, her success confirmed "first, that there was an American public in San Francisco interested in fine acting, regardless of language; second, that there was also a public interested in Italian contributions to the world theatre; third, that among the Italian colony there were many who regarded the Italian theatre as a vital instrument for the preservation of their cultural heritage, of their Italianità [*sic*].[83] Thus, Aguglia's "*Italianità*" had now emerged to the full. It is hard to say whether the transition from regional to national was a conscious project on her part or the result of cultural and historical circumstances (with the outbreak of World War I). Her success in California undoubtedly promoted Italian culture and, at the same time, "legitimized" Italian theater.

In 1916, *La Follia di New York* saluted Aguglia's three shows in town with a burst of nationalist pride. However, that same year, Aguglia also performed in *Tenebre rosse*, a pacifist drama by Arturo Giovannitti, running at the People's Theatre in New York.[84] This seems to be the only time her name was associated with the Italian leftist intelligentsia in the United States, revealing how Italian theater abroad could bring together diverse and unlikely alignments. In the same year, she met Caruso, who complimented her on her voice and suggested that she study singing, because "We must sing together!"[85] Aguglia began studying opera, but Caruso died before they had a chance to work together.

The singer turned actor was a recurrent figure within this generation of performers, but Aguglia's move toward opera first and learning English second signaled a crisis within the Italian immigrant stage circles too. The new wave of immigrants had come to a stop during the 1920 with the introduction of entry quotas, while "Americanism" itself became more aggressive in cultural terms.[86]

With the rising popularity of the movies among the working and middle classes, Aguglia decided to try the new medium, taking a cameo role in *The Last Man on Earth* (John Blystone, 1924),[87] which is never mentioned in her official biographies. Given the resistance of theater folk at the time to the popular medium of film, this silence is not too surprising; but according to Aguglia's daughter: "For the next several years . . . she still performed on the dramatic stage in Italian with my father's company. But it was now a very small operation, which conducted very limited engagements in and around New York City. They just seemed to break even at the end of the month, mainly because their audiences had all but abandoned them in favor of the movies."[88] When Aguglia appeared again on film at a later date, only a few would still remember her past glories (see chapters 4 and 6).

Tina Modotti, Performer from the Immigrant Stage

Maiori was an immigrant performer; Caruso and Aguglia were "traveling players," but their professional status as theater and opera performers was such that they were reviewed by the mainstream American press, and when they appeared in American cinema they were treated as stars, although Aguglia chose not to give herself yet much screen visibility. They were southern Italians, and their regional identity still filters into their public image, and as mentioned, Aguglia's Sicilian origins were almost an obsession with reviewers. As for recent immigrants, their national identity was not clear cut, and their film roles recall negative (Maiori, the *camorrista*) or pathetic (Caruso, the *figurinaio*) stereotypes. And yet their identification with the glorious traditions of the *grande attore italiano* and opera was most definitely Italian, so enlisting them served as a form of cultural legitimation for an American cinema that, after World War I, began to conquer the international market while at the same time attempting to provide its actors with more cosmopolitan settings and make its products more agreeable to middle-class audiences. However, not all performers from the immigrant stage were southern Italian: Tina Modotti, for instance, came from the North East, and her stage career emphasizes the diverse traditions of the diasporic theater in both New York and San Francisco.

Before becoming a famous photographer and a radical political figure in Mexico and Europe, Tina Modotti (Udine 1896–Mexico City 1942) was a working-class emigrant from Friuli and an actress on San Francisco's immigrant stage and in Hollywood.[89] Her experience of the diaspora differed from that of other figures examined here, most of whom came from southern Italy. Friuli—south of neighboring Austria and west of Slovenia—is located on the very borders of Italy, between Western and Eastern Europe, just to the south of the former Habsburg Empire. The region had a long history of migration, both seasonal and permanent, first within Europe, later toward Latin America and the American Mid-West and California; Modotti experienced both. In her childhood, she moved from Udine to Carinthia (southern Austria), a typical mobility pattern before Italian unification: from the poverty of Friuli to the richer areas of the Austro-Hungarian empire. This move familiarized her with German and made her aware of the need to develop her linguistic range. Thanks to mandatory schooling in Friuli, Modotti had received an adequate primary education despite her working-class background. Nevertheless, by the age of twelve, she was already working in a textile factory, exposed to labor conflicts and to her father's socialist politics.

In 1913, she joined her father Giuseppe and her sister Mercedes in California, a favorite destination among the northern Italian diaspora. The enterprising Giuseppe, already familiar with photography because he had worked in his brother's studio in Udine, opened his own photographic laboratory in San Francisco.[90] Both Modotti's knowledge of photography and her interest in politics thus developed within her emigrant family long before they found full expression in the Americas.

In San Francisco she found work in the textile industry with her sister Mercedes (and with many other Italian immigrant women), but despite the heavy workload, the two girls discovered a variety of stimuli in the city.[91] Tina Modotti was a beautiful girl with elegant posture, dark hair, dark eyes, and sensual lips (fig. 1.7). Independent-minded—as women from Friuli often were, as centuries of emigration had released them not only from the protection but also from the oppression of male relatives—she strove to improve her position and started to work as a model for the Magnin department store.

With increasing numbers of Italian immigrants arriving in California, and after the successful performances of Pisanelli, Maiori and Aguglia, San Francisco began to offer a

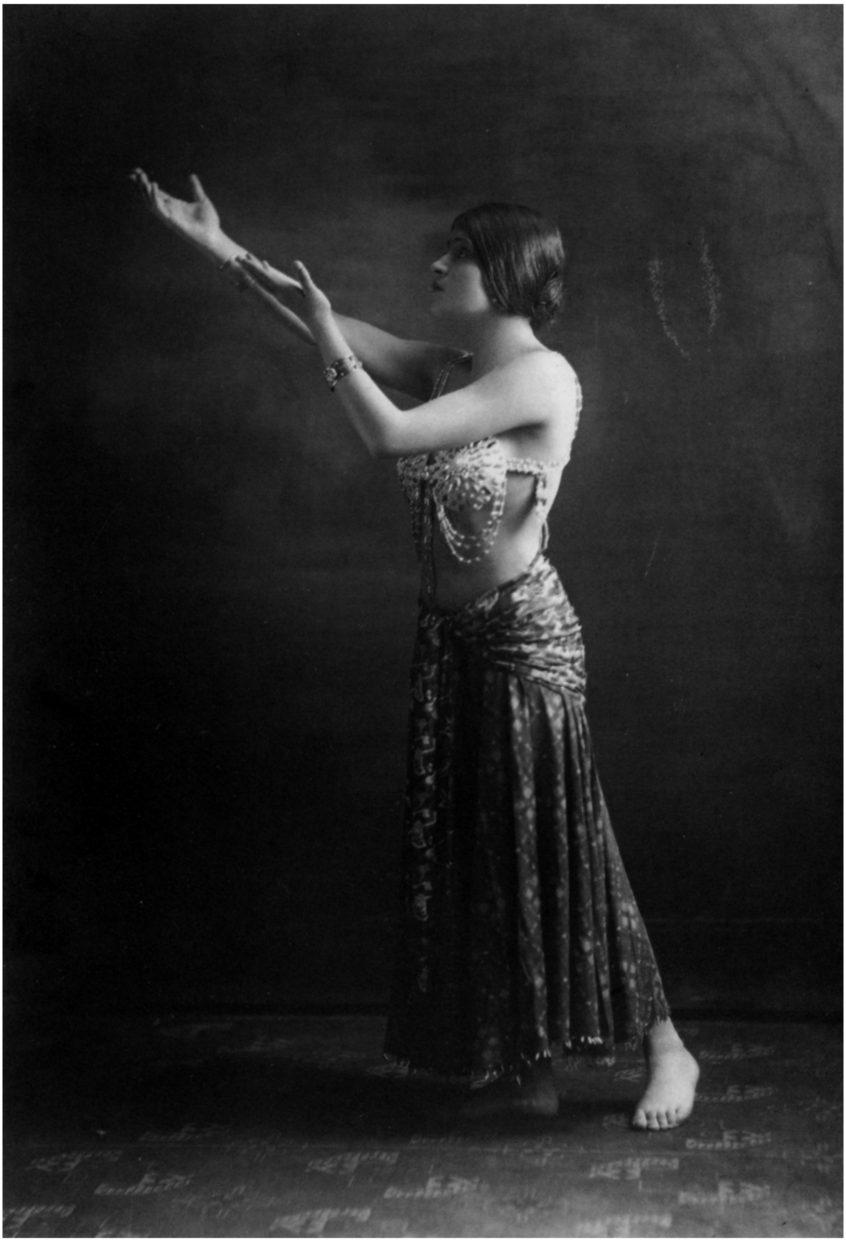


Figure 1.7. Tina Modotti in *Tiger's Coat* (1920).

greater array of shows to its Italian immigrant community. Living close to Washington Square, the Modotti sisters found new opportunities in the theater, not only as spectators but also as performers, because auditions were quite liberal at the time.[92]

The two girls visited the PanAmerican Exposition, inaugurated in 1915. Modotti was particularly impressed with expressionist, futurist, and symbolist paintings, and with a young and charming American-born artist, Roubaix de l'Abrie Richey, nicknamed Robo, whom she met at the Expo. Their intense relationship was a blend of mutual seduction and artistic aspiration. Robo introduced her to a different San Francisco, populated by a community of artists who embraced the ideals of love, peace, art, and revolution.

At the outbreak of World War I, the two socialist brothers Giuseppe and Francesco Modotti supported the unions' pacifist line. However, they worried about the rest of the family in Friuli, as the region was the main Italian battlefront in the war with Austria. In 1917, Modotti began performing regularly on the immigrant stage with the company Città di Firenze under the direction of Alfredo Aratoli. *L'Italia*, San Francisco's Italian paper, praised her performance in *Stenterello ai bagni di Livorno* and was complimentary about her singing, noting that, despite not having much of a voice, she boasted a natural expressivity and a graceful demeanor.[93] Modotti also performed in benefit shows for the Red Cross and for the local socialist paper, *La Voce del Popolo*. Theater and political militancy often overlapped on the immigrant stage, with militants improvising shows and amateur actors performing for unions and charity organizations: fund raising for whatever cause was regularly associated with a show in Italian communities.

Modotti's theatrical activities continued with actor-director Bruno Seragnoli from the La Moderna company, which also employed Frank Puglia, an "accomplished actor [who had] recently arrived from New York, with his wife, Irene Veneroni, whose younger brother, Guido Gabrielli, would later marry Tina's younger sister, Yolanda."[94] (This segment of a Modotti-Puglia theatrical family has not received any attention so far, although both performers moved to Hollywood in 1920.) Seragnoli gave Tina leading roles in famous Italian plays such as *Scampolo*, *La lettera smarrita*, *La nemica*, and in the nationalist drama *Amore nel Tempo di Guerra* (Love in time of war). Patriotic sentiment was strong among people from Friuli, especially after the dramatic Caporetto retreat (described in its desperate violence by Ernest Hemingway in *A Farewell to Arms*), which had forced Modotti's mother and younger siblings to abandon their home and take refuge in central Italy. Modotti also played in radical instant-dramas such as *The Factory Strike* and *The Russian Revolution*. The local Italian press continued praising her "for her goodness as well as for her brilliant artistic abilities," appreciating her involvement in nationalist as well as socialist theater.

Compared with the New York experience, the San Francisco immigrant stage maintained a marked "Italian," almost nationalist, profile, making less use of dialect, with the exception of the "noble" Tuscan. Furthermore, its repertoire confirms the popularity on both coasts of the classics and drama on the immigrant stage, slowly but inexorably substituted later by "*arte varia*", vaudeville and comedy.

The Modotti family was reunited in San Francisco at the end of World War I, when Tina had already built a social life of her own. In these formative years the girl from Friuli took an active part in cultural and political life, in a process common to most emigrants, keeping their provincial and regional origins in the background to embrace *Italianità*, while starting to explore new identities and her youth in the complex world of Central Europe undoubtedly helped her develop a cosmopolitan mentality.

By the late 1910s, her appearances with La Moderna were less frequent; her "look" changed as she adopted shorter skirts and a new hairstyle, in line with the image that cinema and consumerism were presenting to young women at the time.[95] Frequenting the theater and artistic circles, she developed her own style, to some extent based on her training as a model and partly on her ability as a seamstress. Employing the services of a professional photographer, she prepared a portfolio, underscoring her growing professional ambitions, which included Hollywood.

In 1918, Modotti moved to Los Angeles with Robo. The city was not only the site of a developing media industry, but also a place where mysticism, revolutionary meetings, flapper energy and the cynical desperation of the Lost Generation blended to create a unique cultural environment.[96] This atmosphere expressed the transgressive dynamism of the Jazz Age, as well as the deep anxieties of the period, penetrating the screen in a nuanced but perceptible mode and also explaining the movie scandals of the 1920s. During this phase of deep sociocultural transformation, she encountered both a community of innovative artists and standardized film production in Hollywood. She and Robo lived a bohemian life: he worked as costume designer for a cabaret and carried on painting, while she shopped her portfolio to the film studios, looking for a job. In the meantime, she started reading Freud, Nietzsche, and Tagore and frequenting the radical community of Mexican exiles such as Ricardo Gomez Robelo (who would later become the head of the Department of Fine Arts in Mexico City) for whom Robo drew illustrations for poetry books. She also met the photographers Edward Weston and Johan Hagsemeyer, Japanese poet and art critic Sadakichi Hartmann, the eclectic Ramiel McGehee, and other intellectuals connected with art and photography.[97]

Modotti had left her family behind, but she never severed ties with them, and became less connected to the Italian community. She posed for paintings and photographs and hoped her new modern look and exotic beauty would help her to get into the movies. Her film career took off in 1920, when she was cast as the protagonist in *The Tiger's Coat* (Roy Clements), a film produced by W. W. Hodkinson and distributed by George Kleine[98]—a coproducer of Italian historical films—who was familiar with the diva films that partially inspired *The Tiger's Coat*.[99]

Briefly, *The Tiger's Coat* (available on the Internet) is a melodrama centered on an exchange of (racial) identity. In the film, rich WASP Alexander believes Mexican Maria (Modotti) to be Scottish Jean and falls in love with her, but soon her dark skin, black hair, and sensual lips instill doubts about her racial identity. At her engagement party, after a Mexican dance, the guests begin avoiding her in disgust. Alexander, although in love with her, abandons her as soon as his political antagonist tells him that Maria is Mexican and a servant. "I thought I had given my love to one of pure blood like mine," he tells her, "instead I discover that I am tied to a peon of low origins, one who belongs to a despised race!" She tries to explain the initial misunderstanding about her identity, but he rejects her and she leaves. Later she returns to town as a performer: exotically and scantily dressed, she dances before huge stone idols. The audience applauds her, and Alexander, who has already "let that love win over race pride," approaches her full of admiration, but she does not forgive him. During a storm however, Maria joins her ex-fiancé at his home and they embrace: the Mexican girl with bad blood is socially accepted after becoming a successful performer. (This follows in the footsteps of Modotti's own tale as an emigrant from Friuli who was loved by an American after becoming an actress in San Francisco).

Her film performance is professional, without the mannerisms that might be expected from a young actress who had started out on the immigrant stage. She was not influenced by the antinaturalistic style of Italian diva films, rather she appears more "American," probably influenced by the American films she must have seen with Mercedes in San Francisco.

The point of contact between the character of the Mexican maid and the woman from Friuli was rooted in the race issue as, in the 1920s, WASP America considered Italians (and Mexicans) legally white (in terms of naturalization) but treated them with marked ethnoracial prejudice, and limited their opportunities in terms of work, education, and social acceptance.[100]

When Modotti performs her dance à la Isadora Duncan in the film—a mix of Salome with ancient Mexican iconography—she seduces Alexander and the audience, realizing her aims of emotional integration and personal success. As with Valentino, a dance could transform a body with (supposedly) not-completely-white blood into the object of the gaze and desire of WASP audiences.

In the closing scene, in a gesture of tender submission, Maria (Modotti) is at Alexander's feet, her head on the lap of the man she loves, as he reclines comfortably in his armchair: the gaze of the benevolent WASP man who now "accepts" her, legitimizes the woman from Mexico at his feet. Modotti's state of mind during such a performance is hard to guess, considering the liberty she had started to take for herself in her relationship with Robo, and her inclination for unconventional lifestyles. As a young immigrant Italian actress, she would not have had much influence over the narrative, so perhaps her gesture of submission contained a hint of irony (and challenge). Politically aware as she was, this scene offered her a chance to try to heighten sensibility toward anti-Mexican prejudice, so excessively manifested in the film, while masking her own radically different attitudes about issues of gender and race.

Racism in the film is conveyed through a transfer of ethnic identity, not simply from Scottish Jane to Mexican Maria but also from a Mexican maid to an Italian actress, according to Hollywood's implicit rules for casting: whoever embodied a "difficult" ethnicity could not actually belong to it.[101]

In the early 1920s, Italian (and Mexican) performers stood on the uncomfortably narrow border of "whiteness," fascinating Hollywood because of their diversity, but usually dislocated through casting as white but non-WASP nationalities. *The Tiger's Coat* also points to the ways in which class (and celebrity) might affect racial status, shunning Maria not only for her "peon blood" but also for being a maid, and then welcoming her back when she becomes a celebrity. The fears aroused by immigration and the American imperial project after World War I injected American nationalism and nativism into the popular media in many different ways.[102]

The Tiger's Coat shows Maria (Modotti) modeling for a painter and performing and dancing as if these aspects of Modotti's life were known, suggesting a preexisting popularity, confirmed by the self-conscious grace of her entrance on screen, like a prima donna. Several trade magazines, such as the *Motion Picture World*, carry lavish advertisements for the film in typical Art Deco style with a full-page ad boasting: "*The Tiger's Coat* is interpreted by Tina Modotti, the beautiful Italian artist full of talent."[103] The accompanying picture confirmed the exotic image that Hollywood fabricated of Tina Modotti, presented in close-up with flowing red hair, elegant clothes and a tiger, writing: "In her were summarized all the elements of feminine seduction; she was smooth, morbid, sinuous and as sweetly dangerous as a tiger, whose variety of colors and shades could be found in her eyes, in her skin, in her hair." After drawing attention to her physical qualities, the magazine added: "the sensual charm of Tina Modotti was never revealed with better results" implying she was already well known and underlining her exotic sensuality.

For a small production, the array and elegance of the costumes she wears in the film is exceptional, but some sources suggest that the garments were made at home: Robo designed them and Modotti—a skilled dressmaker—sewed them to produce costumes that would enhance her on-screen presence.[104]

After *The Tiger's Coat*, Modotti acted in a western, *Riding with Death* (Jacques Jaccard, 1921) playing the role of Rosa Carilla. In the comedy *I Can Explain* (George D. Baker, 1922), she played Carmencita, a jealous Latin American woman. Edward Weston, who by that time had become her lover, wrote in one of his *Daybooks*, that they would laugh about the stupidity of American filmmakers: "The brains and imaginations of our movie directors cannot picture an Italian girl except with a knife in her teeth and blood in her eye."[105] Later Modotti took a public stand against the anti-Mexican prejudice in American cinema and included *I Can Explain* in a list of objectionable pictures. "In 1920 she had told an interviewer from Los Angeles *Heraldo de Mexico* that she tried to avoid giving offense in her movie scenes about Mexico."[106]

Modotti met the famous photographer Edward Weston in the early 1920s, when her relationship with Robo was in crisis. While the young actress became professionally and romantically involved with Weston, Robo left Los Angeles for Mexico. He aimed to join Robelo, who was returning home in order to be part of his country's cultural renaissance.

Dissatisfied with her film career and tense in her relationship with Weston, Modotti decided to follow Robo to Mexico; alas, Robo died unexpectedly while she was on the train to Mexico City. Her life changed overnight, as she went from posing for Weston to being in charge of the camera, launching her career as a photographer. As Mulvey and Wollen note, "for Tina Modotti, Mexico represented the cause both of a quick politicization and of a rapid evolution as a photographer."[107] Together with Weston she photographed objects, architecture, and popular art for Anita Brenner's *Idols Behind Altars* (a book that became Sergei Eisenstein's inspiration for his Mexican work). Weston in particular appreciated the role Tina played as a woman (and perhaps as an Italian immigrant) reaching out to the *indios*, facilitating the communication that was so essential to the aims of this important book.[108]

Born into a socialist family, beautiful, sensible, and transgressive, Modotti appears too modern and rebellious to adapt to American silent cinema. Her experience in Los Angeles, however, reveals that the film city was a far more stimulating intellectual environment than conventionally depicted.

Since the transcultural phenomena involved in migration imply exchange and interaction as well as conflict and instigate cultural attitudes that range from adaptation to integration or even resistance, her choices represent the whole gamut of possibilities, signaling an increasingly active role on her part. Her performances, from the immigrant stage to Hollywood to becoming a photographer, confirm the innovative role played by migrants, women, and performers—cultural mediators par excellence—within transnational processes. Modotti's film career is also emblematic of broader trends in the silent period—the interplay between cinema and other visual arts, the mobility of ideas and people which triggered issues of race, gender, and nationality, typical of Hollywood as a transnational enterprise.

Between Friuli and Mexico, Modotti's life had spanned California—the San Francisco stage and Hollywood films—but in her disappointing encounter with North American silent cinema, she came face to face with cheap popular drama (and comedy) that clashed with the artistic inclinations of her circle of friends, as well as with American society's racial prejudice, conflicting with the humanistic ideals of Italian socialism. Modotti traveled all her life but emigrated—in the true sense of the word—only to California only to move again when she became disillusioned with the United States and Hollywood. Her subsequent trip to Mexico was an episode of brave cultural exploration, and her subsequent return to Europe an exile.

Together with singer Lina Cavalieri, Tina Modotti was the only Italian actress to star in an American silent film: a record to be considered before dismissing her Hollywood film career as a secondary sphere in her biography.

Italians on the American Stage

Whereas the above-mentioned performers contributed to the history of American silent cinema in a qualitatively significant, but quantitatively minor way, several less prominent Italian performers boast longer filmographies and more interesting (as well as continuous) film experiences. Several of them had a musical background, or so they claimed upon their arrival in the United States, although in most cases, no documentation of their previous work experience in Italy exists. Furthermore, Italian theater did not record singing and acting as distinct activities, especially in smaller companies. It is therefore difficult to establish a precise relationship between their professional musical background and their careers as actors in American silent cinema.

According to Richard Abel, the key role played by cinema in Americanizing audiences implies the study of "how the films themselves, or certain kinds of films, and the stars that performed in them may have represented an 'imagined community of nationality' on the screen," in this specific case, an analysis of the functions and roles of foreign (Italian) performers within this process is necessary.[109]

Cesare Gravina (Sorrento 1858–New York or Naples 1954) played important roles in some significant American films, revealing remarkable abilities as a silent actor. He left Sorrento as the leader of an operetta company that successfully toured Europe and South America and moved to the United States in 1914.[110] American film magazines described him as the "orchestra director at La Scala" or "personal secretary of Caruso." In reality, even though he never directed La Scala, his presence on the set of *My Cousin* is documented.[111] His film debut, an adaptation of Olcott's *Madame Butterfly* (1915) with Mary Pickford, had a musical connection. He worked with Pickford again later, as a scheming Indian nationalist in *Less Than the Dust*, and it was during that production that he met Erich von Stroheim, who shortly after took to him as his favorite actor. Gravina's work with the monocled director included the roles of Ventucci, the unctuous usurer who kills the protagonist, played by Stroheim, to vindicate the honor of his daughter in *Foolish Wives*. He played a pathetic puppeteer in *The Merry-Go-Round*, a junk dealer by the name of Zerkov in *Greed*, and the father of poor Mitzi in *The Wedding March*. Gifted with the versatility typical of Italian actors and the naturalism (*verismo*) of southern Italian performers, Gravina brought a realist variant of acting to the American silent screen that perfectly matched Stroheim's aesthetics. He was short and wiry and used gestures and body language and all his southern Italian expressivity, exploiting his awkward but mobile features, to move from a scene brimming with pathos to one of grim fury in a matter of seconds, as he did in *Foolish Wives*. Since he did not come from the legitimate stage, writes Richard Koszarski, "von Stroheim felt that such actors would have few dramatic mannerisms to unlearn and would be more malleable vehicles for his ideas."[112]

Gravina was cast in some sixty silent films of various genres mostly in dramatic roles;[113] only under the direction of Ernst Lubitsch did he have the chance to play a comedy, in *Monte Carlo* (1930). Among his best performances is Ursus, a man who takes care of a deformed boy in the expressionist *The Man Who Laughs* (Paul Leni, 1928). This part enabled him to explore different emotions, often filmed in close-ups, and gave him the chance to establish himself as a great actor, even without Stroheim's direction.

In 1925, Gravina interpreted *The Man in Blue*, an exemplary instance of Hollywood ethnic politics in its visual, narrative, and casting strategies.[114] The story tells about a Little Italy in transition from the Old to the New World, as the first title stated, within an urban melodrama not unlike that of *Musketeers of Pig Alley*, *The Italian*, and, much later, *The Sopranos*, with a precocious representation of a mafia boss and a progressive Italian journalist who fights him ("My friends, dese secret societies pretty soon make us not wanted dis country"). In fact, in 1924 the United States had reenforced quotas restricting Italian immigration.

The Man in Blue juxtaposes the Italian community with the Irish community, showing the latter in a much more flattering light: the Italian leads, Tony and Carlo, are typical peddlers (a flower seller and a *figurinaio*), unable to protect Tita, whereas the policeman is an authority figure who rescues some Italian "street" children too. He considers Tita a "colleen" and the final brawl at Cafe Palermo is similar to those in Irish saloons; in the end, he asks father O'Reilly to celebrate the wedding, even though they are in Little Italy. This light-hearted "melting pot" however is contrasted with the attitudes of his colleague who calls Tita a *wop* (a derogatory term often used to define Italians).

What is of interest here is not (only) the Italian equals Mafia comparison, but the casting and narrative strategies: although the film is set in Little Italy, the only Italian actor is Gravina. There is even the ever-present association of Italians with monkeys: the inevitable organ grinder is accompanied by a monkey that picturesquely imitates Gravina's agitated gestures. The implicit parallelism is repeated when the boss, Vitti (infantile and gluttonous like Tony Soprano) zealously polishes off a banana. Equating Italians with monkeys is no different from anti-Italian, or, more accurately, anti-immigrant cartoons in general.[115] Yet the role of Capitan Valento as Vitti's antagonist, his passionate tirades against the Mafia, his brave reaction to the bombing of his newspaper, the gallant duel with the boss and, above all, the fact that it is the Italian journalist who eliminates the mobster, are rare narrative occurrences in American silent cinema.

In his films, Gravina often played theater impresarios or characters connected with the circus or show business, but he also played aristocrats, petty criminals and even western old-timers. He usually impersonated either Chinese, Indian, or Europeans in general, playing only a few Italian roles such as in *The Blonde Saint* where we see him on an adventurous voyage to the Sicilian sea, and *The Magic Garden*, partially set in the Venetian musical world.

The *New York Times* praised his work in several reviews; in general, he received considerable attention in the American press. The magazine *Picture Play* described his roles as "pathetic old fellows, life-beaten but happy-spirited failures," quoting one of his best performances. "In 'Merry-Go-Round' he gave the screen one of its finest moments. You surely remember him as the old clown who, dying, kept right on smiling for the children and doing his funny tricks so they wouldn't see his suffering."[116]

A wink, at times threatening or ironic, his expressive face, and his effective use of gestures make him an ideal silent cinema actor. He had a leading role in Stroheim's realist cinema, as either the victim or, less frequently, the executioner. In other films, his characters strike an emotional chord of pathos as fathers who defend the honor of their daughters, or as old men protecting children: a sentimental stereotype that aligns itself with the "good" image of Italians in American silent cinema. But in his two films with Jackie Coogan, he offers a less sentimental relationship than Chaplin does in *The Kid*. Puccini described him as "an old man, short and withered, with very lively eyes and a lean and very effective acting style" (fig. 1.8).[117] Gravina appeared in two of the most authentic silent films with Italian settings: *Poor Little Peppina* and *The Man in Blue*, perhaps acting as a consultant. Both films convey a negative image of the *mafioso*, thus revealing the immigrant community's earliest attempts to distance itself from the Mafia.

With the advent of sound nothing more is heard of Cesare Gravina: he was in his seventies in the 1930s and apparently returned to Italy, effectively ending his film career.[118] It is not even certain whether he died in Naples or in New York as reported by some sources—a historiographical mystery that the scant documentation on emigrant Italian actors does not help to dissipate.

Sicilian Frank Puglia (Linguaglossa 1892–Pasadena 1975) also had a musical background.[119] He made his debut in operetta in Sicily with his father's company, which he followed to the United States in 1907. With this company he toured South America for five years, before returning to New York where he joined the Angelino musical company and subsequently performed on the immigrant stage in "good, bad, very bad, mediocre companies, in dramas, comedies and operettas."[120] In 1915, he married Irene Veneroni, an actress on the immigrant stage. Three years later, he and Irene joined the company La

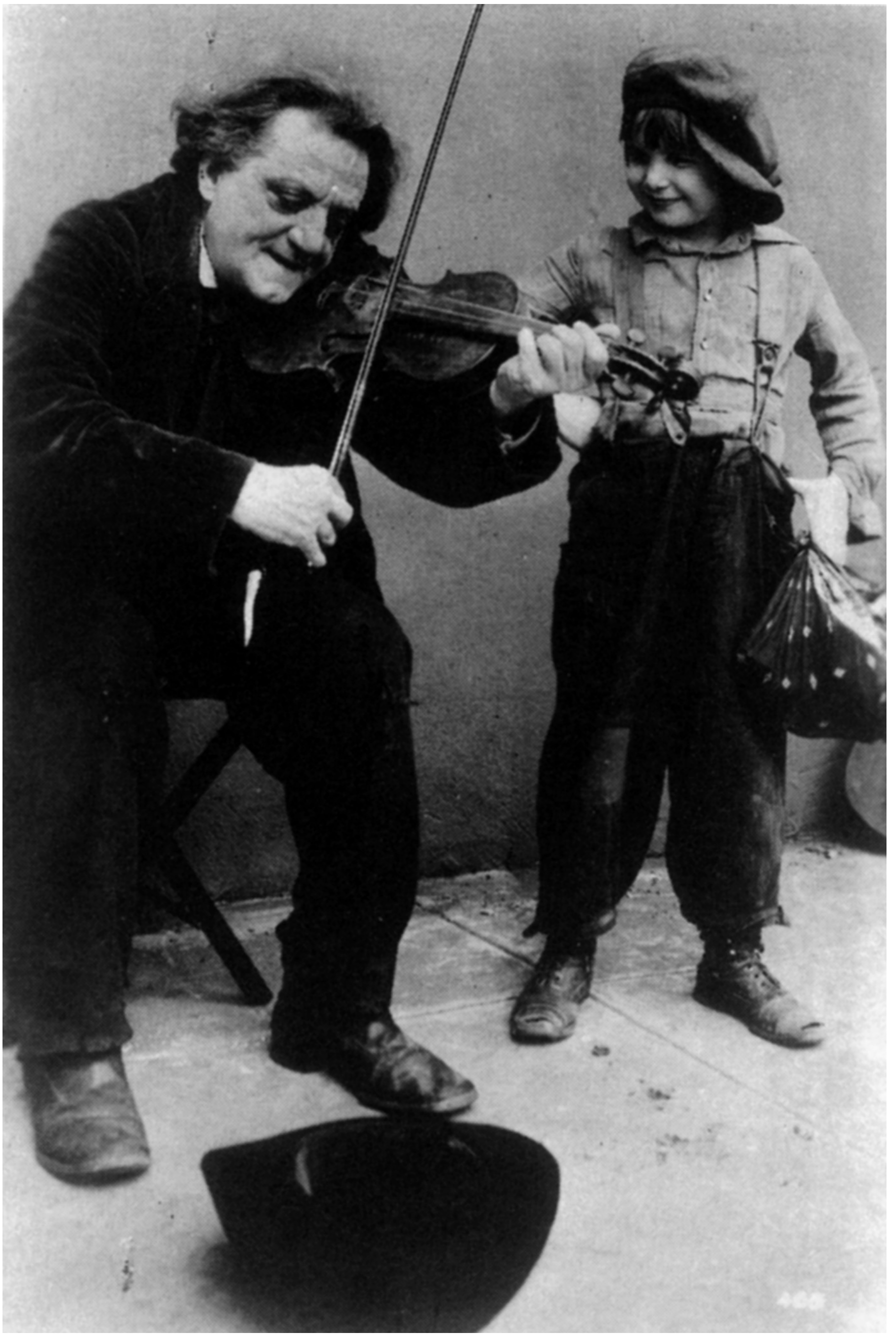


Figure 1.8. Cesare Gravina with Jackie Coogan in *Daddy* (1923).

Moderna in San Francisco, where they met Tina Modotti, sharing the versatile repertoire of Italian theater in Northern California, where they remained until 1921.[121] His black hair, dark eyes, regular features, and skillful acting made Puglia an ideal *attor giovane*, and he was able to enter Aguglia's company in New York, thus reaching the upper echelon of Italian theater in the United States. During his time there, D. W. Griffith saw him in *Orphans of* *the Storm* and hired him to interpret the film adaptation of the famous text.[122] In the film version, Griffith had Puglia play the role of the good brother—the one who protects his blind sister, played by Dorothy Gish, from their shrewish mother and revolutionary fury. In this prestigious film production, Puglia had a costarring role, appearing in several intense close-ups, and it was certainly a very promising debut (fig 1.9). The 1920–1921 season was indeed a noteworthy turning point as it coincided with Rudolph Valentino's official film debut and the move to Hollywood of both Puglia and Modotti: the American film industry had started hiring not only Italian celebrities, but also members of the Italian immigrant world.

Puglia's career in silent films continued in association with Griffith: he played in *Fascination* with the Griffithian Mae Murray, and alongside Lillian Gish in *Romola*, a prestigious 1925 American production shot in Italy. In the film, Puglia played the villain Adolpho Spini, an adventurer who helps Tito (William Powell) to become the despotic chief magistrate of Florence, skillfully constructing his evil character—an adviser whose Machiavellian touch makes the role notable despite his ridiculous wig. Shooting in Italy gave Puglia the chance to return to his Sicilian village carrying a passport that vouched for his profession as an actor. "Then he returned to New York again, only to make another voyage with the Griffith company, this time to Germany to make *Isn't Life Wonderful*,"[123] in which he

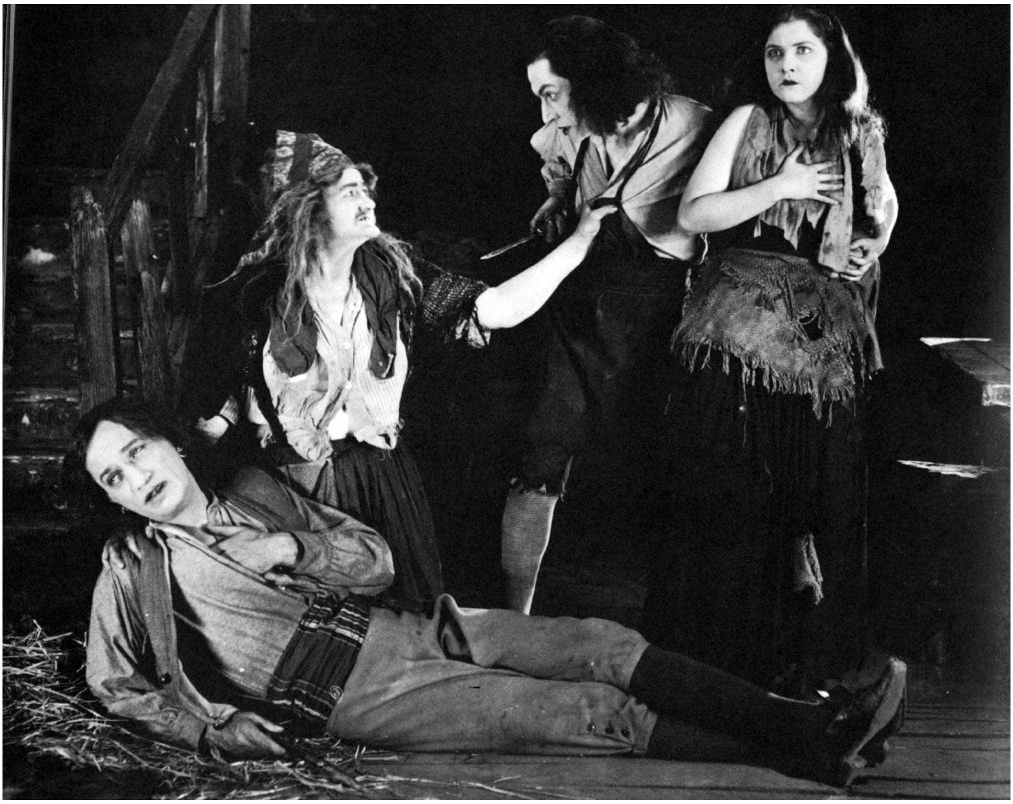


FIGURE 1.9. Sheldon Lewis, Lucille La Verne, Frank Puglia, and Dorothy Gish in D. W. Griffith's *Orphans of the Storm* (1921).

had an important part as Theodore, a bespectacled young Polish refugee, working as a waiter in a club to pay for his studies. Aside from the occasional comic interlude, interacting with figures generically dubbed "the Professor" and "the Grandmother," his character in the film was not particularly structured. Griffith however always had him play "good guys."

Thus, in the 1920s, Puglia seemed to be destined for a brilliant film career. Further confirmation of his emerging success comes from his role as an Italian American gangster in Little Italy, alongside other Griffithian actors, such as Dorothy Gish and Richard Barthelmess, in *The Beautiful City*.[124] This film is the prototype of ethnic melodramas set in Little Italy, with "suffering mothers," brothers on two sides of the law, and an unfair prison sentence. This narrative model recurs almost obsessively, especially in the sound era, stressing the role of the family in Italian narratives, hinting at a possible equal division of Italians into good and bad "brothers," but maintaining their association with crime.

Puglia's film career seemed to escalate, but fame never arrived. He was a handsome young man, but he lacked Valentino's intensity and did not play the romantic lead in American silent cinema. In 1926, disappointed with his film experience, Puglia returned to the stage and organized his own theater company, The Company of Seven, in San Francisco, proposing opera, operettas, dramas, comedies. But when Universal offered him a part in the prestigious *The Man Who Laughs*, he returned to Hollywood.[125] It was a small role as a clown, but he took it, commuting between the stage and film for the next five years, but never catching the shooting star of film stardom.

Another Sicilian star of the silent era with a musical background was Paolo (Paul) Porcasi (Palermo 1879–Los Angeles 1946) who began his career as a tenor in Italy, before touring extensively in Europe, the United States, and Latin America. During one of these tours, in 1917, he decided to stay in the United States.[126] He performed on Broadway from 1916 to 1928, wrapping up his career on stage at the Broadhurst Theatre with a personal hit as Nick Verdis, the protagonist of the prototype of the gangster musical *Broadway*. His first role in American silent cinema may actually have been in *The Fall of the Romanoffs* (Herbert Brennon, 1917), shot in New Jersey, but he is not credited in the AFI catalog, just as he was uncredited in *Cobra* (Joseph Henabery, 1925), starring Valentino. His first and only official credit in silent films was as a diplomat, Count Tanza, in *Say It Again* (by Italian American Gregory LaCava, 1926), a comedy set in the imaginary kingdom of Spezonia in World War I, in which William Ricciardi was also cast.

Guglielmo Ricciardi was Maiori's colleague in the early days of the Compagnia Comico-Drammatica Italiana.[127] He also composed and sang funny *macchiette* in Neapolitan and, being a friend of Caruso's, sang duets with the tenor, who immortalized him in a famous caricature. Ricciardi's film debut was, in fact, in *My Cousin*, alongside Caruso, but he had been credited under the wrong name (Joseph Ricciardi), thus delaying recognition (fig. 1.10). Therefore, as in the case of his rival Maiori in *Little Peppina*, these early appearances of important actors from the Italian immigrant stage in American silent cinema went unnoticed. In the 1920s, Ricciardi, who had rough features, but was a refined and experienced actor, appeared in some prestigious productions such as *That Woman*, set on Broadway

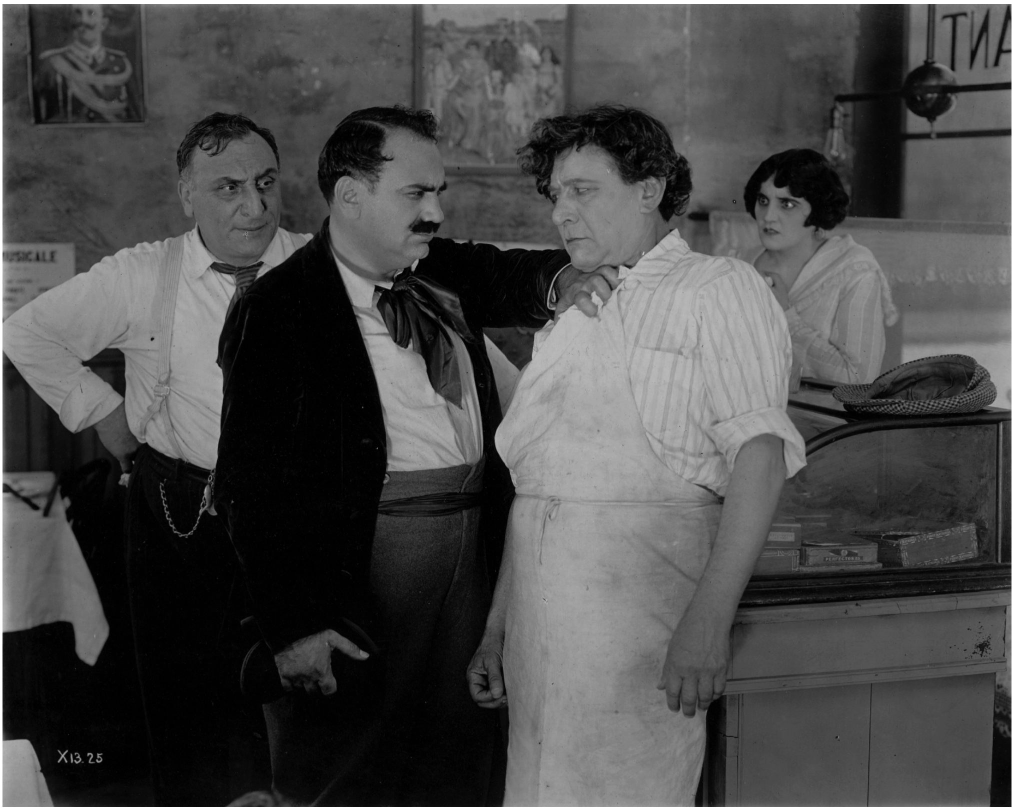


Figure 1.10. *Left to right:* William Ricciardi, Enrico Caruso, Henry Leone, and Carolina White in *My Cousin*. (Courtesy of the Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins University.)

and in high society. He played Papa Jacques in *The Humming Bird* with Gloria Swanson among Parisian Apaches, while in *Greater Than Marriage* he played an impresario. *The Side Show of Life* was set in a circus, and *Heart of a Siren* in French high society. In the newspaper picture *A Man Must Live* he was a cabaret owner, and in the above-mentioned *Say It Again* he was Prime Minister Stemmler. Besides his role in *My Cousin*, the only Italian characters he played were a puppeteer from Little Italy in *Puppets*, and an uncredited auctioneer in Rome, with a few close shots and select lines in *The Eternal City* (George Fitzmaurice, 1923), a pro-Fascist film shot in Italy soon after the March on Rome (see chapter 2).

High society, circus, or theater and restaurants seemed to be the ideal casting environment for Italian performers; however, they rarely played Italian characters. Most of these films are lost, making it hard to know what parts these performers played and, obviously, to evaluate their acting styles, but in the surviving titles, Ricciardi does act in a natural way, and is far from being a secondary character.

The actors grouped together here left southern Italy with a musical background. After an initial stop in New York, in the small Brooklyn theaters and in Little Italy or, less often, on Broadway, they reached Hollywood. They influenced American cinema from within, with their versatility and lively naturalistic acting, working across different genres, from comedy to drama, in a great variety of shades and styles. In the silent era, they rarely played Italian characters; they tended instead to be cast as "continental" or Latinos—a negation of their national identity, which reveals both the strong anti-Italian sentiments in the United States and the weakness of Italian national identity at the time. Despite everything, however, most of them kept their Italian surname which evidently continued to represent a resource in theater and, by extension, in cinema.

Other Italian actors came to Hollywood not from the immigrant stage but directly from Broadway. One of these is Monty Banks, an emigrant from central Italy. A contemporary biographer describes a personable and all-round performer even capable of performing his own stunts:

> It is almost impossible now to describe a once-popular comedian like Monte [*sic*] Banks by speaking of his mannerisms; he doesn't seem to have any. He is short, on the plump side, possessed of a miniature mustache that would seem suave on a head-waiter but it is somehow a badge of apprehension on him. He is likeable. But, after a long and rigorous training at Warner Brothers and elsewhere, when he came to make features independently he took refuge in "thrill" comedies that owed a great deal to Harold Lloyd. Let it be said that he made these legitimately: in *Play Safe* he lowers himself by a rope from the roof of a runaway train toward the open door of a boxcar, letting the girl climb first on him and then up the rope while he sways precariously over embankments, bridges, and mountainside drops that are unmistakably authentic. The stunting is impeccable, worth keeping in film anthologies; but we cannot quite remember the man.[128]

It is often argued that comedians receive little attention from scholars because of the popular appeal of the genre (and the difficulty of discussing comic performances). This might explain why the bibliography on Banks is slim and a very small number of his ninety credits survive, despite his popularity in his day. What we do know is that Monty Banks's real name was Mario Bianchi (Cesena 1897–Arona 1950). In 1914, after doing casual work in France and England, he left for the Americas, where he worked in vaudeville and as a dancer. Three years later he made his film debut Mack Sennett's Triangle-Keystone, where he was the straight man to Fatty Arbuckle. By 1919, he had moved to Vitagraph to play a villain as a foil to comic star Larry Simon.

In 1920, after meeting Abe Warner, he appeared in a series of eight comedy shorts for the latter's company and by 1923 he was writing, directing, and performing in two-reel comic shorts such as *Pay or Move* and *The Golf Bag*, noted for their funny acrobatic numbers. The success of the series led him to set up an independent production company, the Monty Banks Pictures Corporation.

His first feature film, *Racing Luck*, released in 1924, was set within the Italian immigrant community. He played a character with the same name as his own, Mario Bianchi, who arrives in New York to work in his uncle's restaurant. He fights against Tony, a gangster and his rival in love, and conquers the girl by winning a car race. It is a story of immigration, seen from within the community, representing the gangster as the antagonist. In the first part, it is more dramatic (and realistic) than comic, but it explodes into rhythmically paced slapstick stunts in the second part. In this film, Banks was following Chaplin's example, using comedy for social commentary in a narrative as autobiographic as the Tramp's. He invested a great deal in this film, to the point that not only did he recover his own name and his national identity as the protagonist, but he also promoted the film during its Italian distribution. An article in *Photoplay* reported the trip: "Cesena has 50,000 souls and not one stayed home to stir the spaghetti on the day Monty returned. Was not the good Lord amiable, whispered the natives under the swaying red, green and white bunting, in the case of Mario Bianchi, who left Cesena with a few lire and a smile."[129] Most American articles, in recounting the lives of these actors, emphasize the emigrant's journey to success paved with the green of money, reached through personal commitment coupled with the Calvinistic ability of the self-made man: "Rollicking hair, black and glossy, parted in the center. It's a symbol of his character, that hair. Of the spontaneity of his Latin temperament, through which runs a clear sharp line of business ingeniousness. Monty is a comedian, but he is also a businessman. He would not have his own producing unit with Pathe if he were not. He would still be a dancing dandy at Dominguez Café, in New York, as he was ten years ago, or a stuntman, doing other people's hazards." The *Photoplay* journalist described Banks's professional progression before reaching the screen (not only as a dancer but mentioning his work as a stuntman, which explains his propensity for athletic comedy, in competition with Fairbanks and Lloyd), and highlighting his Italianness but with little true knowledge of what that might mean, as we can see from the expectation that spaghetti might be the main dish in Cesena (actually famous for its tortellini) to the "spontaneity" of his Latin "temperament." "Temperament" and "spontaneity" would imply, however, that he was a "natural" performer, ignoring the complex work behind his slapstick stunts, which required long preparation, a sense of rhythm, good acrobatics and a use of the body—anything but "spontaneous." The rhetoric of the publicist is transparent in its stereotypical characterization of the immigrant performer, emphasizing "Italian" traits that could easily cease to be qualities and be transformed into defects by the prejudiced: Banks's hair is glossy because of "grease," and "greasy" was one of the derogatory terms used to refer to Italians in America. Hollywood instead is depicted as a magical place where dreams come true and where performers who work hard and "get lucky" can find fame and fortune. Among Bianchi's feature-length comedies, *Play Safe*, well known thanks to its effective slapstick train chase, is generally considered his best work, together with *Horse Shoes*.

In the spring of 1928, perhaps because of economic problems, he moved to Great Britain where he directed and starred in about twenty comedies, consolidating his international fame. With the coming of sound, his foreign accent became a problem, so he decided to concentrate on directing and producing. From Great Britain, he traveled between films and in 1931, he went to Italy, where some of his films had been distributed, gaining him popularity in the part of Birillo. Back in London, in 1936 he started his professional (and romantic) relationship with Gracie Fields whom he directed in several comedies (*Queen of Hearts*, *Keep Smiling*, *He Was Her Man*, and *Shipyard Sally*). At the outbreak of World War II, they married and moved to Hollywood, where he obtained American citizenship in

1940. Making an unequivocal political choice, he remained in the United States during the war and entertained the Allied troops together with his wife. After approximately fifty films, including a secondary role in Mamoulian's *Blood and Sand* and directing *Great Guns* with Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, he made his last appearance in *A Bell for Adano* (1945) in the symbolic role of an interpreter.

At the end of the war, Bianchi returned to Italy with his wife. He abandoned the cinema to run a hotel in Capri, which was not an uncommon choice for emigrants who dreamt of returning home and often invested their money in tourism as a way of expressing their appreciation for their "beautiful country."

Bianchi was a leading comic in silent slapstick, but the unavailability of his films—only five survive—makes critical appraisal of his output practically impossible. Of the performers mentioned so far, he was the only one to have his own production unit and to happily move across the Atlantic and around Europe, making films in different countries—a cosmopolitan businessman on the lookout for good opportunities. Even though he had Americanized his name, his first production, *Racing Luck*, addressed the Italian emigrant community, and he returned home after retirement; his *Italianità* was remarked upon in most of the numerous obituaries published in the United States.

There was another set of actors from the Italian theater who ended up in Broadway after touring Europe or the Americas. Alberto Roccardi (Rome 1864–Paris 1934), according to Puccini, "was a theater actor who went to America in 1884 with a pantomime company. In the United States, he worked alongside such Broadway celebrities as John Drew, the Barrymores' maternal uncle, John Barrymore, Billie Burke, May Irwin, Maurice Costello. It was Costello who introduced him to the movies at Vitagraph."[130] The *Moving Picture World* noted about him:

> He has the faculty of taking what some might consider a minor part and making it stand out, which, after all, is the best test of an actor. . . . He did this in one of the first roles that fell to him at the Flatbush studio, that of the railway guard in Mr. Barnes of New York. . . . Mr. Roccardi has been on the stage in the United States for thirty years. Even as a very young man he was successful in a number of pantomimic productions in Paris. He appeared in The Devil's Auction and Excelsior, and engagements at the *Folies Bergère* and in vaudeville were followed by an important role in the big Hippodrome production of Bayard. It was at the Hippodrome that one of the Hanlons, visiting Paris, saw Mr. Roccardi and engaged him for work in America.[131]

Roccardi, like Maiori, went through this interesting phase of international stage productions, which anticipated the development of many film genres in early cinema.

> The young man made a hit both in "Fantasma" and "Superba." After the expiration of his contract with the Hanlons, Mr. Roccardi's transition to the speaking stage was a natural thing. He appeared under the direction of Charles Frohman . . . with such artists as John Drew, Billie Burke and May Irwin. In the season 1912–13 Mr. Roccardi visited Europe for the first time in twenty-eight years, going to London with one of Klaw & Erlanger's productions, "Officer 666." . . . This was Mr. Roccardi's last stage work. The comedian likes pictures, and he likes working at the Vitagraph.

This precious item from the early days of a cinema still being made in New York, alongside the stage theater, connects Roccardi's experience with that of Maiori (*Superba*) and Aguglia (Frohman), documenting the complexity of the world of the stage in the 1910s, when the distinctions between different forms of performance were often (con)fused—to the advantage of Italian actors who were experts in professional versatility.

In this period, "Work in pictures will improve the art of the actor," as Albert Roccardi put it. "There are actors, for instance, who do not know how to walk across the stage, or how to hold their hands. [. . .] The camera teaches that, and very early."[132] Roccardi had already perceived the changes cinema would introduce to the work of performers, especially the use of the body, so characteristic of Italian actors. This attention to the physical aspects of acting might also derive from his early work in pantomime and the mixture of circus, vaudeville, and theater run by the Hanlons.

Roccardi was a good actor: short, with regular features (fig 1.11). He made a successful professional career for himself on Broadway and worked for the powerful impresarios Klaw and Erlanger who, together with the Frohman brothers, formed an important bridge between stage and cinema. His film debut came early on, in 1912, when he made *Two Knights in a Barroom*, and he had accumulated sixty-four credits by the end of his film career in the 1930s. By the 1920s, he had been cast in several Vitagraph shorts. Later, he appeared in successful pictures such as *The Virtuous Model* (Albert Capellani, 1919) with Dolores

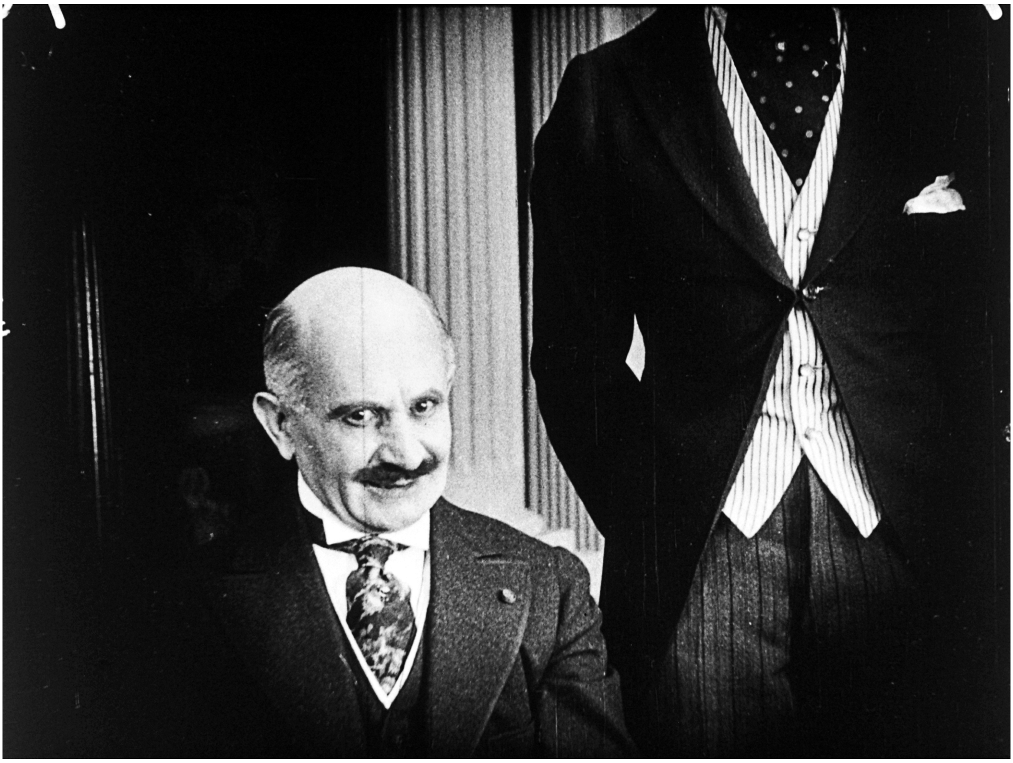


Figure 1.11. Albert Roccardi in Capellani's *The Virtous Model* (1919).

Cassinelli, *The Passionate Pilgrim* (Robert Vignola, 1920), and in *The Street of Forgotten Men* (Herbert Brenon, 1925) in which he played the assistant of Agostino Borgato. In *Partners in Crime* (Frank Strayer, 1928) an early gangster film with Wallace Beery, Roccardi played the restaurant owner Kanelli. He made an apparently smooth transition to sound, playing foreign characters such as Padre Miguel in *Romance of the Rio Grande* (Alfred Santell, 1929) with Warner Baxter (and Borgato), and the foreign minister in Lubitsch's musical comedy *The Love Parade* (1929) giving a very slick performance. By that time, he was in his late sixties and decided, like so many others, to return to Europe and died in Paris in 1934.

Neapolitan Fred (Federico) Malatesta (Naples 1889–Los Angeles 1952) performed on stage in Paris, Buenos Aires, Santiago, Chicago, and Broadway before reaching Hollywood, where he worked from 1915 to 1948. Little is known about his biography, but his film career is interesting albeit uneven, and the American press often singled him out for praise in the silent era.

Malatesta probably left Italy around 1913 to perform in Latin America, where he became fluent in Spanish. After this experience, he moved to the United States and appeared in seven shorts produced by Essanay in 1915. (This date indicates that he did not fight in World War I, which explains why he never returned to Italy.) His subsequent filmography includes about 120 films, which offer a broad sample of the socionational typecasting open to an Italian actor in Hollywood: aristocrats such as count Theodore, a romantic hero who kidnaps a duchess and her daughter in *The Demon* (George Baker, 1918); the Grand Duke Paul of Russia in the White Russian counterrevolution in *The Legion of Death* (Tod Browning, 1918); and General Lopanzo in the Republic of Santo Dinero in the comedy *Full of Pep* (Harry Franklin, 1919). Tall, good-looking, and with longish dark hair, Malatesta often played the rival in amorous situations throughout the 1920s; he also offered a sober but moving interpretation of the bootblack friend of "little lord" Mary Pickford in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (Alfred Green, 1921), leading the expedition of New York supporters to save the boy's title.[133] In the castle scenes he is elegantly dressed, performing with unquestionable naturalness, confirming his suitability to play aristocratic and romantic figures. Malatesta also played a Jewish character, Max Levy, in *The Woman He Loved* (Edward Sloman, 1922) one of the rare silent films that explicitly dealt with anti-Semitism, but above all he interpreted the elegant French ambassador who consoled the Czarina (Pola Negri) in Lubitsch's *Forbidden Paradise* (1924). His career continued, progressing in fits and starts after the advent of sound, and he was sometimes uncredited.[134]

Among this group of performers, Malatesta had less "screen time" in sound cinema than in the silent era, but he also worked in several foreign versions of Hollywood films, including the Italian version of *The Big Trail.* Thanks to his involvement with Broadway rather than immigrant theater, Malatesta evokes the figure of the nineteenth-century Italian theater actor. In a way not dissimilar to Puglia's case, his quasi-Valentino look hinted at a star potential that never developed, for any one of the mysterious reasons that regulate Hollywood's success stories.

In the silent era, the flow of traveling players arriving in Hollywood from the stage (or from the circus[135]) included several other unknown figures, whose obscure names, ending in a vowel, appeared more often than one would expect in the credits.[136] Their stories may differ from the ones narrated so far, but they shared the same context—the history of the great migration, the expansionist drive in the US economy, cinema and politics, and nativist reactions.

Any history of Italian performers in the Americas would be incomplete if it didn't also cover the Latin American experiences of these performers—Fred Malatesta appeared on stage in Santiago and Buenos Aires; Cesare Gravina, Paul Porcasi and Frank Puglia too traveled to Latin America; Mimì Aguglia was more popular in South America (and Mexico) than in Italy and the United States; and Caruso constituted such a legend in the Amazon jungle that Werner Herzog constructed *Fitzcarraldo* (1982) around his myth—just as for their migrating compatriots, we can speak of the Americas in the plural in the case of these performers. But the lack of research in this domain makes accurate cross-referencing of their experiences arduous, an unfortunate circumstance, considering their role in both North and South American film history.

The contribution of Italians to the development of Latin American cinema is, indeed, unquestionable.[137] Sicilian Mario Gallo went to Argentina in 1905 with an opera company—the most common professional opportunity open to traveling players; by 1908, he was one of the first producers of fiction films in Latin America.[138] Italians played a key role in early filmmaking in Brazil too, as in the case of cinematographer and director Gilberto Rossi, who collaborated with Italian film director Alberto Traversa in the making of a rather impressive (realist) film, *O segredo do corcunda*, "the first Brazilian feature-length film shown abroad."[139] Some early Brazilian nationalist films were made by Italian filmmakers too; for example, Guelfo Andalò directed *Patria Brasileira* (1917), and Vittorio Capellaro directed *O Guarany* (1916) and *Iracema* (1919), adaptations of two key texts in Brazilian culture. This important Italian contribution in the construction of Latin American national cinemas and national mythologies of origins indicates the radical difference in their position within the local culture industry when compared with the United States, which reflects the diverse conditions of leadership and legitimation of Italian migrations in those countries.

The inter-American connections and the leading role of Italians in stage and film productions in Latin America constitute the most transcultural experience in this field of study, but research is still lagging, as it is complicated by the different modes of production.[140] Also, very few Latin American silent films have survived, making the task of writing their transcultural history difficult, although it would certainly be a very rewarding field of research. But this is not only another latitude: it is another story.

The experience of the Italian immigrant performers and the traveling players in American silent cinema reveals the film industry's strategy of exploiting the naturalism and versatility historically associated with the *cultura italiana dello spettacolo*, particularly favorable to the dynamic narrative structures of its film production and the film genres it was developing. The use of Italian actors was part of an effort to internationalize film casts in a bid to conquer the world's screens and in particular the European market. As the filmographies demonstrate, as an implicit rule, they did not play Italian characters but Europeans or non-American figures. Furthermore, the casting of immigrant performers was subject to the usual prejudices concerning Italians, and most of all, southern Italians. Since most of these performers came from Campania or Sicily, they bore the stigma of racial stereotypes, evident in the reviews concerning a female "Sicilian actress" such as Aguglia, as well as the expectation of an artistic potential as Italian performers.

TWO

Aristocrats, Acrobats, Latin Lovers, and Waiters: Italians in American Silent Cinema

> I recall those women with their swaying and uncertain gait, their hands those of survivors of the shipwreck called love, caressing the walls along the corridors and clinging to the curtains as they went; inebriated with the scent of flowers amid shady gardens and marble stairways.
>
> In those vital and turbulent days of eroticism, these women would literally bite off and devour palms and magnolias, but their frail and sickly mien took nothing away from their audacious curves, molded by a feverish and precocious youth.
>
> —SALVADOR DALÌ[1]

This chapter focuses on Italian actors who left their native Italy for Hollywood; more specifically it focuses on the men. The female stars—*le dive*, the divas—who were a fundamental component of Italian silent cinema, did not join the (small) stream of Italian film actors heading for Hollywood in the interwar period. One might argue that the reasons for the female performers staying behind are both biographical and cultural. One the one hand, the crisis of the Italian cinema in the 1920s perhaps didn't face them as much as their male counterparts—several were married to their producers or to aristocrats.[2] On the other hand, there was no (narrative and aesthetic) space in Hollywood for their languid eroticism, associated with Italian *dannnunzianesimo*, a literary vogue inspired by Gabriele D'Annunzio.

The absence of female emigrant Italian performers underlines the issue of gender in relation to both Italian and American national identities and points to the robust prevalence of a maleness that was directly related to nationalism. Historians have recently devoted more attention to the Italian women of the diaspora, but there is no detailed account of their presence in the American mass media.[3] In this narrative, the absence of Italian divas in American silent cinema speaks volumes about the censorship of sensuality, the body, and emotional expressivity associated with WASP culture, which distributed its eroticism evenly between the perilous vamp and the angelic Victorian heroine.[4]

The traveling players mentioned in chapter 1 were individual performers; they came from different backgrounds and had their personal reasons for moving to Hollywood. Not many experienced Italian film actors ended up working in American silent films, but the stories of those who did help shed some light on the transnational connections between the Italian cinema and the American film industry.

In the silent period, this relationship neatly falls into two phases: first, the hegemonic presence of Italian cinema on the American market in the 1910s (see chapter 1), and then its decline, or better disappearance, after World War I which coincided with the American move to impose its "irresistible empire" on Europe. The expansion of the American film industry had three main effects on Italian cinema: Hollywood's domination of Italian screens, a limited "co-option" of Italian film actors in Hollywood, and a spate of American filmmaking in Italy (see chapter 3).

From Italian to American Silent Cinema

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Italian silent cinema had successfully exploited its national artistic and literary patrimony, exporting its films all over the world. Italian producers—the bankers and aristocrats who financed most of the national film companies at that time—imposed aesthetic and literary qualities on both historical epics and diva films.[5] Their ideas of what constituted a quality product were at variance with those of their American colleagues who, prior to World War I and in response to rising popular demand, had been involved in the quick and efficient production of films with mass appeal. The Italian target audience was (upper) middle class, and part of the intent was to guarantee aristocratic producers relevant ideological benefits to help mold a national identity, or *fare gli Italiani*. Since lofty intellectual themes and expressive artistic requirements meant that films should last as long as plays or operas, Italian silent cinema had a head start in feature-length film production.

In the early 1900s, American distributors showed a keen interest in this type of Italian cinema. George Kleine, for instance, made his fortune distributing Italian historical epics such as the *Last Days of Pompeii*, *Spartacus*, *The Fall of Troy*, *Nero*, and *Quo Vadis* in the United States.[6] The distribution of these celebrated Italian productions encouraged the American film industry to abandon the variety programs of the nickelodeons in favor of feature films. But while the mechanism of supply and demand and the search for cultural legitimation primed interest in importing these films, the internal process of "Americanization" was already moving in another direction as "local ads tended to 'Americanize' the production [*Quo Vadis*], attributing it to Kleine and sometimes erasing any reference to its Italian origins."[7]

However, the arrival of these Italian epics on American screens favored the cultural and artistic legitimation of cinema as a medium, encouraging the inclusion of the American middle class among the film-going public.[8] In the United States, this process led to a rise in ticket prices and the construction of more comfortable venues dedicated solely to film, as lengthy programs demanded comfortable, prestigious facilities. Despite having been erased by the hegemonic American historiography of film, the impact of these Italian (and European) films on the development of American cinema is undeniable: the direct influence of Pastrone's *Cabiria* on Griffith's work is well documented.[9] And yet no Italian film actor reached the Pacific shores at that time.

Italian cinema was not grounded in an industrial structure and relied heavily on loans from national banks. Furthermore, Italian wartime cinema not only lost access to enemy markets, but it was cut off from crucial Latin American and European commerce and was affected by protectionist US taxation policies introduced in 1918. After World War I, Italian cinema fell into a crisis because of overborrowing and overproduction, the lack of an industrial project, and the insistence of aristocratic producers to continue to shoot myopic diva films in overdecorated salons with actors draped in satin gowns and large hats, while turbulent crowds protested in the streets.

In January 1919, in a last-ditch attempt to save Italian cinema, two banks (Banca Italiana di Sconto, Banca Commerciale Italiana) and most of the important production companies signed a charter to form the Unione Cinematografica Italiana (UCI), a financial trust that promised to set up a more efficient organization. But this recovery soon proved to be illusory. The UCI produced a huge number of films—outdated due to the rapidly changing tastes of an audience trapped between mass consumption and class conflict. The results of this overproduction were not even distributed in the Italian theaters, which, in the meantime, were being overrun by foreign pictures.[10] After 1921, when the catastrophic UCI experiment came to an end with the crash of the Banca di Sconto, national film production fell from the 150 films in 1922 to a few dozen a year and continued to drop throughout the 1920s. In the interwar years, American (and European) cinema dominated the Italian market. Following the Fascist takeover of the government in 1922, the authorities showed little interest in cinema as an art form; instead they encouraged an open market for film productions and preferred to concentrate their cinematic activities on L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa (LUCE), producing newsreels and documentaries starring the Italian *divo* of the time: Benito Mussolini.[11]

Meanwhile in Hollywood, producers were busy building an efficient, vertically integrated studio system, imposing protectionist taxation on competing European products, and co-opting personnel from rival film industries. In fact, dramatic changes to the sociopolitical and economic conditions of Europe, devastated by the first mass war and deeply affected by the sociocultural turmoil triggered by the Russian Revolution, had brought about a mounting crisis in European cinema. Thus, in the 1920s, important European silent film industries (Scandinavia, France, and later Germany) witnessed the departure of directors such as Ernst Lubitsch, Jacques Feyder, Victor Sjöström, and F. W. Murnau and performers such as Greta Garbo, Conrad Veidt, or Hans Larson, who all moved to Hollywood. This phenomenon has been amply studied and interpreted both as a form of exile and emigration, depending on whether the reason for leaving Europe was ethnic, religious, political, or economic.[12] These complex transcultural processes deeply transformed the American cinema, and specific attention has been attached to the influence of certain national cinemas, such as German expressionism, on Universal's output or on the birth of horror movies and the later film noir.[13]

Debate on the strategies of the American cinema at the time must, however, take into account the continuous tension between Americanization and internationalization. Internally, the American film industry "fused" an ethnically and culturally diversified public into a mass audience through its films—the narratives, the star system, the genres—but also through its distribution mechanism, the construction of movie palaces, and the sociogeographic articulation of the neighborhood theaters managed by a unified industry through the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) that operated a policy of self-regulation within a monopolistic structure.[14] In terms of foreign affairs, while inviting European film personalities to join a booming industry, Hollywood fought an undeclared war, flooding the world's screens with its products—an invasion that would trigger a varied reaction from the European film industry.[15]

The American film industry adopted both defensive and inclusive strategies in its international relations, as the United States itself did toward immigrant communities, oscillating between excluding foreign films from the market and "assimilating" personnel, with the co-option of European stars and filmmakers. This cross-fertilization, together with the "Americanization" of the "new immigrant" audiences,[16] created a cosmopolitan product: the Hollywood silent film. But just like with its immigration policies—which saw in the Nordic, German, and French segments the "good" (and thus welcome) Europeans—Italians seem to have suffered from cultural stigmatization as a consequence of Italian immigration at the time. For their part, the Italian film people—critics, producers, filmmakers, and actors—nurtured divided or even hostile feelings toward Hollywood. These two factors explain why the Italian film presence in Hollywood is not as significant and well-documented as might be expected.

If it is true that Italian cinema dominated the international markets in the early 1910s, Italian film production had almost disappeared even from national screens by the 1920s, as theaters were showing predominantly American films. Unlike their European peers from the North, however, Italian filmmakers and film actors would not move *en masse* across the ocean to join a booming industry. Furthermore, even though there had been a rich exchange between the Italian and American film industries in terms of distribution, the coproduction of spectacular costume films with George Kleine and the American films that were shot in Italy in the 1920s, American film moguls neither sought new performers on Italian sets, as they did, for example, in Germany, nor did they invite Italian film actors to Hollywood.

The Italian cinema of the 1920s suffered from dramatic delays in developing a modern industry and revealed a contradictory attitude on the part of Fascism toward film and its use.[17] A secondary effect of this crisis is that it erased the historical memory of Italian cinema's glorious past. A lack of awareness of the importance of Italian silent film history may lead historians to underestimate the significance of the fact that very few Italian film professionals took part in American silent film. Indeed, the real reasons why they did not come in troves to Hollywood may well emerge from a study of the experiences of the few who actually went there, considering the important influence of word-of-mouth reports and personal relationships in emigration processes.

In the 1920s, the small group of Italian film personalities who crossed the ocean to reach California included Luciano Albertini, Eugenio De Liguoro, Lido Manetti, Tullio Carminati, Guido Trento, and minor figures such as Agostino Borgato.

LUCIANO ALBERTINI

Luciano Albertini (Lugo di Romagna 1882–Bologna 1945) was a circus artist and a well-known figure in Italian silent athletic-acrobatic films; he was famous for his role in the *Sansone* serial.[18] The popularity with Italian audiences of Maciste, the muscular hero of *Cabiria*,[19] encouraged the production of serials starring "strong men" (*uomini forti*) and acrobatic women, "a world made from the fusion . . . of sport, competitiveness, theatre, circus, and a philosophy of action."[20] This genre was actually the only Italian film product not to suffer during the crisis of the 1920s. Indeed, it kept its protagonists busy in the cultural climate of Fascism with its cult of dynamism and exaltation of physical activity (fig. 2.1).

Handsome and athletic rather than muscular, Albertini was one of the leading personalities of this genre; in addition to being a film director and producer, he is credited with making the first Italian horror film, *Il mostro di Frankenstein*, in 1921. In the 1920s he moved to Germany where he enjoyed a successful film career and the nightlife of roaring Berlin. In 1924, he accepted a contract with Universal for *The Iron Man* (Jay Merchant, 1924), but he soon discovered that it was a serial (of fifteen episodes) rather than a feature film, and that he was not to be the leading man. Disappointed because the "athletic-acrobatic" films he had made in Italy and Germany were feature films with high production values, he returned to Berlin. There he resumed his work in spectacular action films—cliffhangers with incredible stunts and sophisticated settings with a touch of irony, constructed around his charismatic personality and abilities as a performer.[21]

He had turned fifty by the time sound had conquered the movie theaters, bringing with it the demise of the genre he had helped to popularize. Syphilis and alcoholism eventually led him to a tragic end in a mental hospital in Bologna.

Universal had invited Albertini not so much on the strength of his acting and performance, but because of his German experience; he did not cross the ocean in search of mere employment but stardom, and he left Hollywood of his own volition and not as a failure. The legend of the mecca of film was still under construction, and in the eyes of some Italian actors, Hollywood lacked the splendors of the flourishing postwar German cinema.

EUGENIO DE LIGUORO

In the 1920s, when the movies were unencumbered by language barriers, European filmmakers and performers fit in easily with the Hollywood crowds, contributing to a cosmopolitan milieu, as in the worldwide adventures of the aristocratic (Neapolitan) De Liguoro dynasty. Actor on stage and film and cinematographer during World War I, Eugenio De Liguoro (Naples 1899–Los Angeles 1952) was invited to India in 1921 to perform in and codirect four colossal films for the Madan Theatres company: *Nala Damayanti* (an epi-

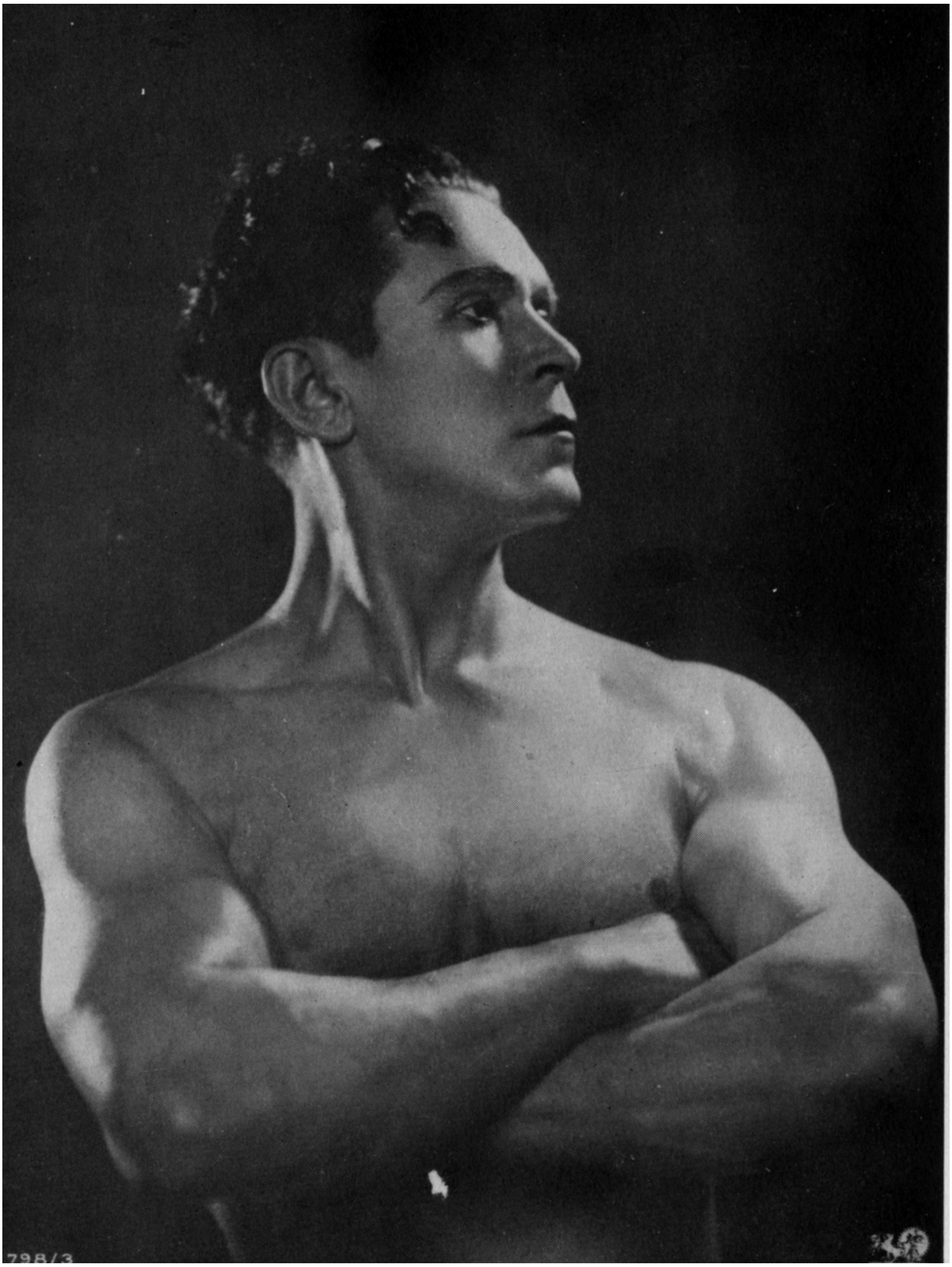


Figure 2.1. A promotional Italian photo of Luciano Albertini.

sode from the *Mahabharata*), *Dhruva Charitra* (a Puranic legend), *Ramayana*, and *Ratnavali*. On the strength of his success on the Indian subcontinent, De Liguoro was invited to London, where he shot one film, (perhaps) entitled *Blue Blood*.[22] In 1924, he moved from London to Hollywood and played secondary roles in two good films, *The Fast Set* and *Lost: A Wife*, both directed by William deMille and set in upper class milieus. The protagonist of the two films was a sophisticated womanizer, Adolphe Menjou, and both of these comedy-dramas involved a reflection on the institution of marriage, typical of deMille's films of the period, where Europeans were often seen as sources of distraction and temptation. In addition to De Liguoro, *Lost: A Wife* featured another Neapolitan aristocrat, Mario Carillo. In fact, when filmographies include one Italian, chances are other Italian actors are credited in the same films, but this "collective" participation has not been recognized as an "Italian influence," perhaps because these performers failed to develop a sense of belonging to a culturally Italian community. In professional terms, these groups of Italian names in the credits attest to at least a high level of solidarity among both the aristocrats and the performers from the immigrant stage. At times a group of Italians came together because of personal relations; or of regional connections; or perhaps it was the studios that felt that the milieu (historical setting, the music world, the circus) called for Italian performers. The fact remains that even when several Italian names appear in the credits, film historians never discuss this "coincidence" in terms of national culture.

The Fast Set and *Lost: A Wife* were Eugenio De Liguoro's last performances as an actor, although he was only in his thirties. In 1929 (with the advent of sound), he returned to Italy, where he directed sound comedies: *Piccola mia*, an Italianized and unclaimed remake of deMille's films, and *Aria di paese* with popular comedian Erminio Macario. When he returned to the United States to learn more about American sound filmmaking, he met his future wife, the Italian Fortunata Demetrio. After their marriage, the couple traveled to Latin America and made a home for themselves in Chile, where De Liguoro directed ten films between 1939 and 1946, all of which were distributed internationally and featured a cast whose last names often ended in a vowel, further confirmation that the mobility of Italian performers was multidirectional and that Italian directors made an enormous contribution to Latin American cinema.[23] In 1952, De Liguoro returned to Hollywood where he directed a small film, *Stop the Cab*, and was preparing to work on a television production when a fatal heart attack brought his career to an untimely end. De Liguoro's experience in Hollywood was not as important as his role in both Indian silent cinema and in Chilean sound cinema, but it was truly cosmopolitan, as he brought his varied expertise to transcultural exchange. Yet, Italian filmmaking abroad, in Asia as well as in Latin America, has not yet been the object of systematic study, but this void has contributed to the false image of a provincial Italian silent cinema making decadent films for the national audience despite its major presence in, and influence on, early filmmaking around the world

A symptom of the problematic relationship between Italian actors and the American cinema at that time is the absence of Italian references to their work in Hollywood, although a detailed biography of Eugenio De Liguoro does exist in Spanish. Italian press and editorial resistance toward American cinema at that time was such that both the travels of Italians in Hollywood and the arrival of American filmmakers in Italy in the 1920s were ignored. Hollywood represented the peak of "Americanness" at a time in which contradictory attitudes were developing toward the United States in an anti-American Europe weakened by war. In Italy, this sentiment was reinforced by Fascist nationalism and by the claim that Italian cinema should represent a higher form of culture (as an art form and not a merely commercial interest), an attitude shared by producers, performers, and film critics.

LIDO MANETTI

Before going to Hollywood, *attor giovane* (leading man) Lido Manetti (Florence 1899–Hollywood 1928) had a successful career in Italian cinema, working with divas such as Francesca Bertini, Italia Almirante Manzini, and Rina De Liguoro in over forty films. He left for the United States at the height of the Italian film industry crisis in 1925, the year when—surely not coincidentally—most of these performers decided to move to California.

He had a lucky break when Universal invited him to Los Angeles for a screen test. Being good-looking, elegant, young, and fair (not a swarthy Latin lover), Manetti (fig. 2.2) was able to obtain a contract with Paramount thanks to the help of his friend Adolphe Menjou. Between 1927 and 1928, Manetti made seven films. He had a secondary part in *The Love Thief*, set in the imaginary kingdom of Moraine, together with another Italian film actor, Agostino Borgato, at whose home he was staying as a guest. He then appeared alongside Menjou, Virginia Valli, and Louise Brooks in *Evening Clothes*, an adaptation of a French comedy. In *Hula*, set in Hawaii, he had a more prominent role as Harry, the passionate suitor of Hula (Clara Bow); he appeared elegantly dressed and sporting mustache à la Menjou and his blue eyes, but failed to impress the girl. In Stiller's *The Woman on Trial*, with Pola Negri, he played an untrustworthy painter, while in *The World at Her Feet* he was the jealous husband of Florence Vidor. *Easy Come, Easy Go* was a farce about bankers and robbers; in *The Showdown*, he courted Evelyn Brent in the Mexican jungle. In *The Woman Disputed*, an adaptation of Guy de Maupassant's *Boule de Suif*, he played Nika, a Russian officer competing with Austrian Paul (Gilbert Roland) for the love of Norma Talmadge.

In 1927, Manetti changed his name to Arnold Kent, not because of some desire to "Americanize" himself but because of the way English speakers pronounced his first name—Lie-doh—which sounds like "laido," meaning "dirty" in Italian.[24] Changing names was a complex cultural practice in Hollywood. In the cast of Manetti's films, for instance, we find Virginia Valli, whose real name was Virginia McSweeney, while Polish actress Pola Negri was forced to give up her improbable name—Apolonia Chalupiec—in order to break into German cinema.[25] The most common practice for Italians in Hollywood was to Americanize their first names while preserving the last name, thus adapting their individual name to the American situation as well as expressing their Italian origins by maintaining their family name. Both cases, however—that American actresses chose Italian names, and Italians preserved theirs—confirm that an Italian last name in show business was (and would remain) an asset.

The films Manetti made were quite cosmopolitan, with settings ranging from Hawaii to Paris, but they always respected the implicit rule: he never played an Italian character. His role was usually that of the rival in love, either a womanizer or, far less frequently, the

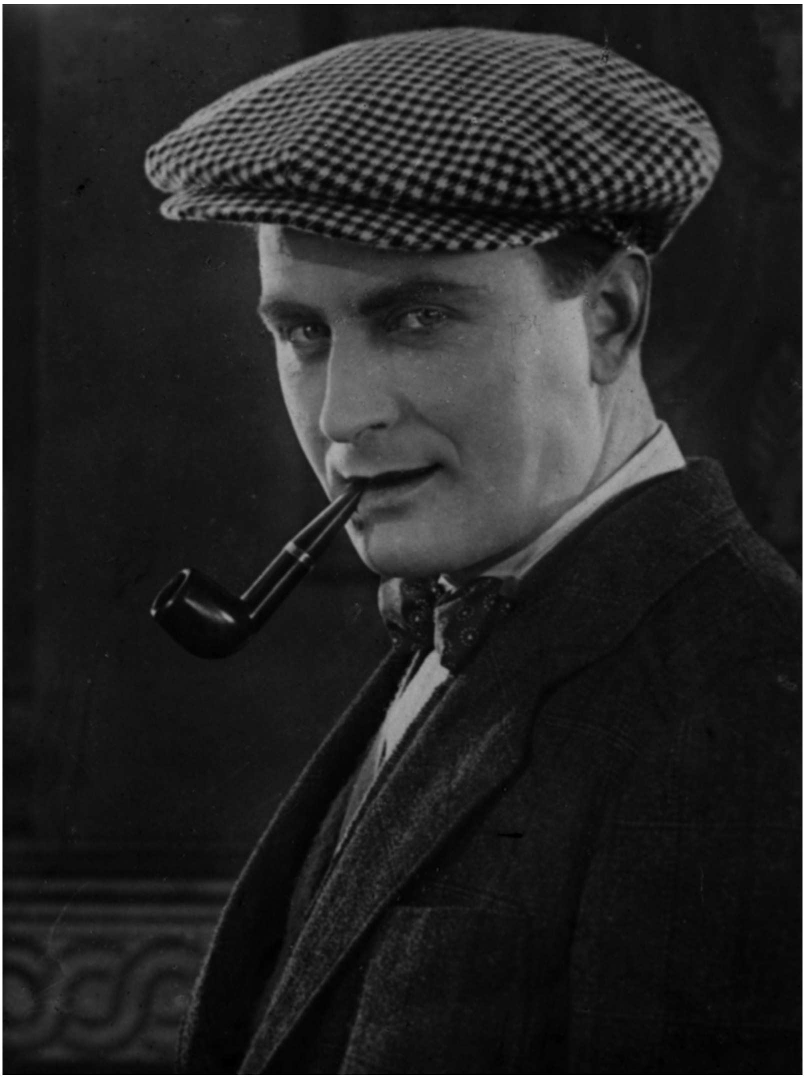


Figure 2.2. Lido Manetti in an Italian promotional postcard.

romantic lover. (Valentino too, at the beginning of his career, was often cast in this type of dualism, given that the Latin lover figure maintained, like the vamp, the potentially negative aura of a seducer from foreign lands.)

In 1928, while engaged in a major role in the prestigious *The Four Feathers* (John Waters), which became *Beau Sabreur*, set in the Foreign Legion and casting also Gary Cooper and William Powell, he died in a mysterious car accident. It has been rumored that behind it, there was one of the several 1920s Hollywood scandals. Sergio Leone claimed to have heard this rumor from his father, Roberto Roberti, who had directed Manetti in Italy.[26] Whatever the case, given the quality of the films he was in, his career was definitely on the rise, and his untimely death created an opening for a potential successor to Valentino, who had died in 1926.

TULLIO CARMINATI

Another Italian who often wore a tuxedo on the American screens was Count Tullio Carminati (Zara 1894–Rome 1971), born in Dalmatia. He worked on stage with Eleonora Duse and traveled with the actress on her American tours.

After Carminati gained film experience in Germany, Joseph Schenck invited him to the States in 1925, where, according to Katz's *Film Encyclopedia*, he "enjoyed popularity as a suave matinée idol on Broadway and in films" (fig. 2.3). In Hollywood silent films, he appeared in *The Bat* (Roland West) as detective Moletti, antagonist to the genial crook, whereas in *The Duchess of Buffalo* (dir. Sidney Franklin) he played an operetta lieutenant in love with an American ballerina played by Constance Talmadge. In 1927, in *Stage Madness* (dir. Victor Schertzinger), a melodrama with Valli, Carminati played the neglected husband of another *ballerina*, while in *Honeymoon Hate* (dir. Luther Reed) he played prince Dantarini, who marries a rich and spoilt American woman (Florence Vidor) in Venice. In 1928, he played a Russian musician who seduces a Viennese countess in *Three Sinners* (dir. Rowland Lee), a drama set in central Europe with Pola Negri and Warner Baxter. Thus, Carminati too sometimes played a romantic leading (and occasionally sentimental) man, while in other films he would embody a mean womanizer; being blond with blue eyes he was always cast as a European, and at times as an Italian.

With his knowledge of English, Carminati also acted on the American stage and was met with considerable success in *Strictly Dishonorable*, a comedy by Preston Sturges. Carminati followed *Strictly Dishonorable* to London, and on his return to the Old Continent appeared in English, Italian, and French films, but his adventures in American silent films were only an interlude.

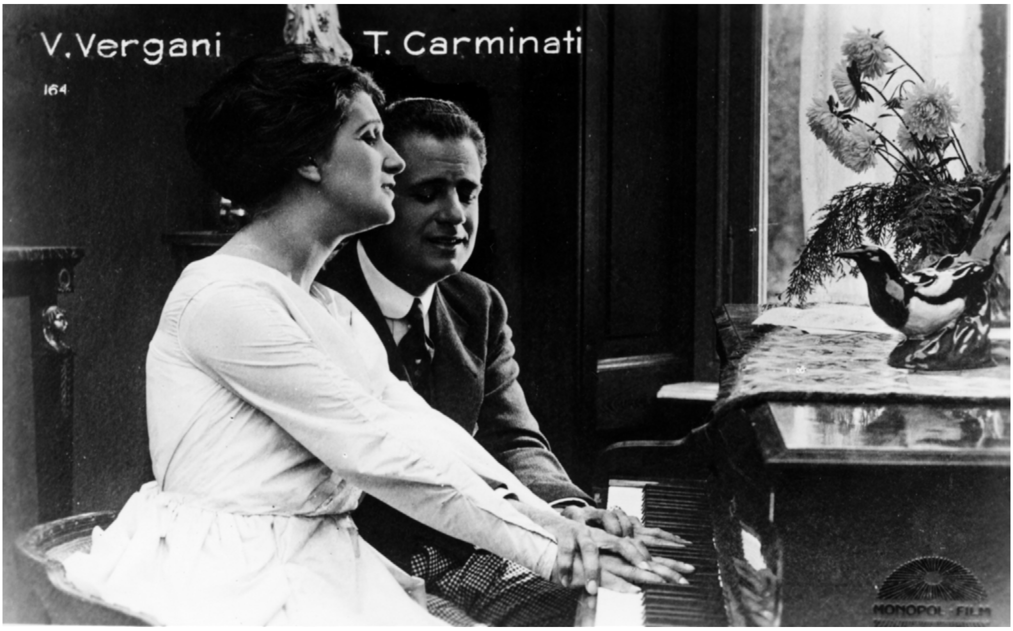


Figure 2.3. Tullio Carminati with Italian actress Vera Vergani.

GUIDO TRENTO

A little-mentioned Italian film actor in Hollywood is Guido Trento (Naples 1892–San Francisco 1957). The most significant period in his career was the early phase that was both Neapolitan and Italian. He is credited with some seventy films, as a coprotagonist and flanking important female stars. Handsome and elegant, he made his film debut in 1913, and went on to act in several feature films with Napoli Film or Polifilms on the studio sets built in the Vomero district of Naples since 1912.

Trento was the *attor giovane* at Polifilms when Italy entered the war, in 1915, and he immediately volunteered to enlist in the Italian army. An article in the *Motion Picture News* (August 21, 1915) includes him among the Italian film people who had enlisted and enumerates: “Alberto Fassini of Cines, officer of the Royal marine, Comte Antamoro of Polifilm, the *metteur en scene* Count Trissino, Guido Trento *artiste de talent*, and from Milano Film Comte Airoldi,” along with other aristocratic names. Trento must have been considered an important figure if the journalist chose to mention him in this list of powerful film personalities whose aristocratic origins represent an often forgotten aspect of Italian silent film production. However, Trento’s filmography indicates that he did not actually fight in the war, but he did work in a series of patriotic films made in Naples. His career therefore highlights the differences between a “Neapolitan cinema” usually identified with a product appealing to the masses, and the upper-class cultural attitudes of other Neapolitan filmmakers, with a rather more Italian identity.[27]

After 1917, he worked in Milan, Turin, and Rome, performing in films with respected directors and stars (Francesca Bertini, Vera Vergani, Eva Makowska, Italia Almirante Manzini, Soava Gallone, Rina De Liguoro) and plots taken from quality literary sources.

Trento played next to Francesca Bertini, the greatest Italian silent diva, in the prestigious *Frou-Frou* and in the whole series on the seven deadly sins. He also costarred with Vera Vergani in *La paura d’amare* (Roberto Roberti, 1920), adapted from a work by Dario Niccodemi and produced by Caesar Film in Rome.

In 1922, because of his professional status in the Italian film industry, Trento got the chance to work in two spectacular American productions by Gordon Edwards shot in Rome for Fox: *The Shepherd King* and *Nero*. He played two important roles: King Saul in *The Shepherd King*, and Tullius, a Christian, in *Nero*. American trade papers took note of him, and the *Exhibitor Herald* (April 22, 1922) emphasized how international the cast was, also mentioning Guido Trento and Sandro Salvini (Tommaso Salvini’s grandson). An American review of *The Shepherd King* in *Pictures and the Picturegoer* (March 1925) states that Trento as Saul “gives a very good character study of the king, whose jealous fears as he realizes his rapidly declining power, react upon him for his own downfall.” Trento’s photos as Saul accompany some of the reviews, making him known to American audiences too. Reviewing *Nero*, the *Exhibitor Herald* (October 13, 1923) appraises the mostly Italian cast and adds, “Guido Trento as Tullius was the handsomest man I have ever seen on the screen.” It was perhaps an exaggeration, but at the time of Rudolph Valentino, appreciation of the Italian male was beginning to take root in the United States.

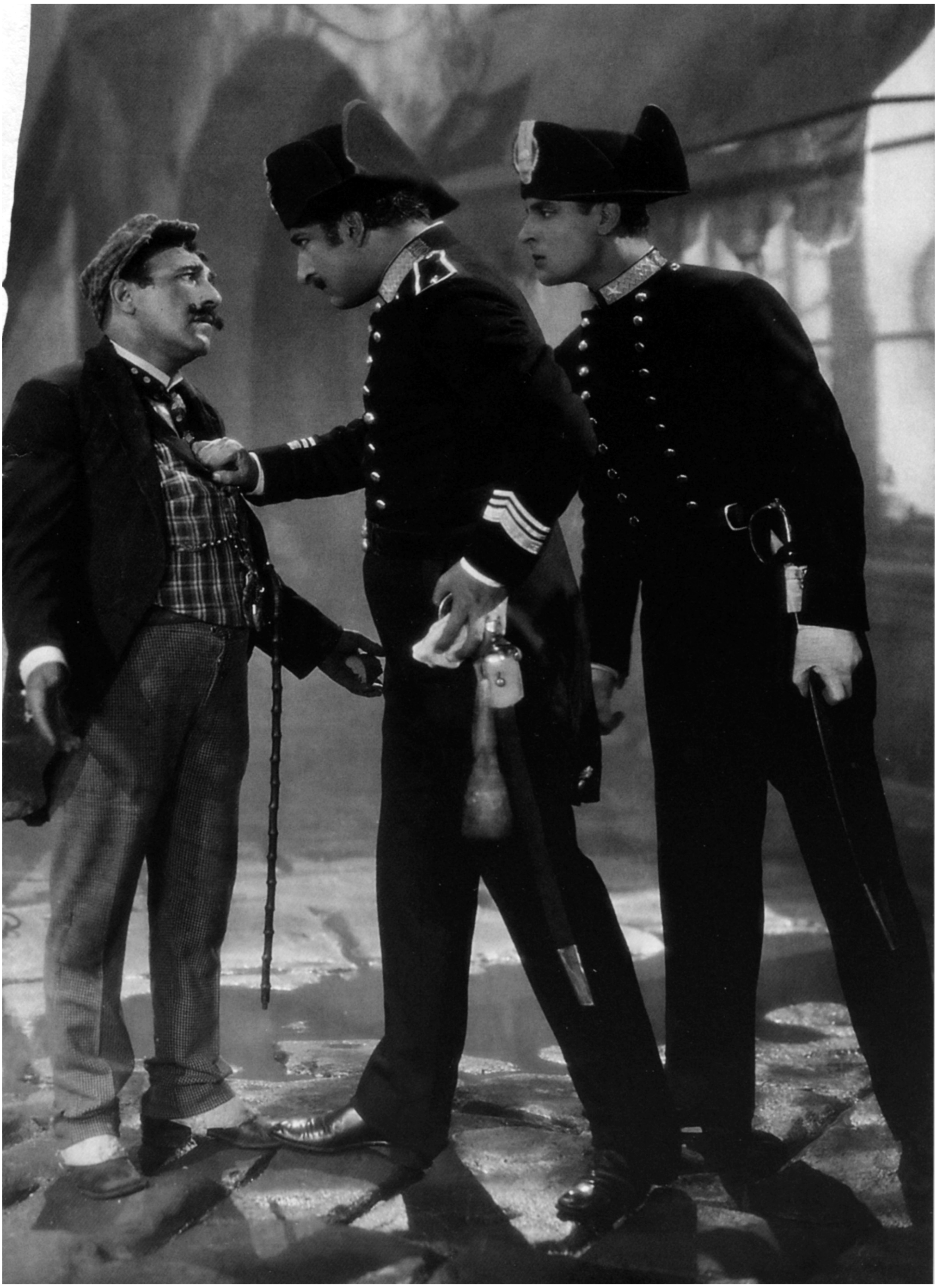


Figure 2.4. From the left, Henry Armetta as the circus manager, Guido Trento, and Alberto Rabagliati as the carabinieri in Frank Borzage's *Street Angel* (1928).

It is not surprising that after working with Trento on these two Roman sets, director Gordon Edwards invited him to Hollywood in 1924. It was also the year that Fascism transformed itself into a regime, but the artists named here never gave politics as a reason for leaving Italy. Professional and industrial reasons seem to provide a better explanation for this diaspora, considering that from 1922 to 1930 the number of Italian film productions was at its all time lowest.

The *Motion Picture Herald* (April 1924) mentions Trento in a credited role in the cast of *It Is the Law* that Edwards adapted from a drama by Elmer Rice. It was a prestigious production, widely reviewed, but Trento's name never appears in the press, despite his role being duly credited. But this was the last film Edwards would direct, his career being cut short by a sudden, fatal heart attack, and the Neapolitan actor was left without a sponsor.

This unfortunate circumstance encouraged Trento to move to San Francisco in July 1924. Here, he joined the Italian immigrant stage, working with the Pisanelli company at the Alessandro Eden Theater.[28] By 1928, however, Trento was back in Hollywood and performed in *Street Angel*, a masterpiece of silent cinema by the Italian American director Frank Borzage (fig. 2.4). The film is set in Naples, and Charles Farrell and Janet Gaynor, the leading Fox stars at the time, play two characters whose spiritual values meld with those of a naive Catholicism. Trento has a prominent role as a *carabiniere* and appears alongside other Italian performers, including Henry Armetta (in the role of the circus manager), Gino Corrado, and Alberto Rabagliati. He plays a sergeant, tricked by Angela (Gaynor) and Mascetto (Armetta), who hides her in a circus bass drum when the *carabinieri* come chasing after her. The sergeant keeps up his search, virtually persecuting her, often seen as a long expressionist shadow on the walls of the city's buildings. He captures her at the very moment when she finds happiness with painter Gino (Farrell), but the sergeant takes pity on the poor girl and waits so she can spend one last hour with her sweetheart before taking her to jail. Trento has significant screen time (around ten minutes overall) and several close-ups; his performance is not "picturesque" like Armetta's Italian character; on the contrary, he is restrained and offers quite a mature interpretation for 1928. The Italian censors, however, did not accept the film's representation of a "sordid" Naples or the belittling of the *carabinieri*, so they cut most of these scenes from the Italian version, which explains why Italian critics never discussed Trento's important role and performance in *Street Angel*. In the film, the lively streets of Naples are not presented in the picturesque style of the time, because, most probably, the southerner performers had advised the set designer on how to create a more realistic representation.

Later, Trento appeared in *The Charge of the Gauchos* (Albert Kelley, 1928), also released as *Una nueva y gloriosa nacion*, an Argentine-US coproduction. It was a transnational experiment, which reveals another area of cultural interaction by the Italian diaspora in terms of identity: Latin America. Often overlooked, and only mentioned in passing in discussions on the coming of sound, this interaction takes for granted that for somatic and linguistic reasons, Italians were well suited to play Latin characters or interpret films in Spanish. Given the availability in Hollywood of Mexican and Latin performers for these roles, it is again a compliment to the versatility of Italian performers that they were selected for these parts.

No filmography credits Trento in Griffith's *Lady of the Pavements*, but a photo in *Photoplay* (July 1929) documents that he appeared in it "with Jetta Goudal in his arms." And he also played an uncredited role in *The One Woman Idea* (Berthold Viertel, 1929). We could assume then that his career was taking shape, and the coming of sound would offer him new chances and a crucial role in the formation of Italian identity in Hollywood.

AGOSTINO BORGATO

The Venetian Agostino Borgato (Venice 1871–Hollywood 1939) too had appeared on stage with Eleonora Duse. He started out in Italian silent cinema as early as 1913, but with the deepening of the crisis besetting the Italian film industry, he went on tour in England where he appeared in several plays. He arrived in California in 1925, earlier than his friend Lido Manetti, appeared with Monty Banks in *Horse Shoes* and *A Perfect Gentleman*, and often worked alongside expatriate colleagues.

In silent cinema, with his prominent nose, thick hair and heavy features, Borgato played credited roles of varying importance in major films, including Herbert Brenon's *The Street of Forgotten Men*, King Vidor's *La Boheme*, Alexander Korda's *The Private Life of Helen of Troy*, Dorothy Arzner's *Fashions for Women*, Henry King's *The Magic Flame*, and Raoul Walsh's *Hot for Paris*. He was with Greta Garbo in *Woman of Affairs* and *Romance*, because the actress appreciated his presence on the set, as she used to say that his features reminded her of her mentor, director Mauritz Stiller.

In *The Street of Forgotten Men*, his first American credit, he played Adolphe, a "make-up artist" helping street beggars to create their "handicaps." He wore a long black beard and could be seen puffing on a cigarette holder even while camouflaging parts of their bodies, assisted by a short fellow with a mustache (Albert Roccardi). Borgato has some long sequences on-screen: his role is vital in terms of the narrative, and his performance is effective. In *Hula*, he plays Kahana, the loyal bodyguard and "nurse" who supports Hula (Clara Bow) in her bid to escape from the rules of society and from her suitor (Manetti) to ride her horse or bathe naked in some small lake. He reveals a good sense of comedy and well-functioning dynamics with the young actress. His career continued into the sound era.

The contingent leaving Italian cinema for Hollywood was modest both in numbers and in star value. Perhaps Italian film actors, unlike their colleagues from music and theater, were not keen to travel outside Europe even at a time when ignorance of foreign languages was no real obstacle since cinema was still silent. Furthermore, when they did go to the United States, they had no intention of immigrating to Hollywood; instead they traveled back and forth (Carminati), went to Latin America (like Eugenio De Liguoro) where they felt more welcome, or to Germany (like Albertini). The situation was different for Borgato or Trento, who settled in the United States and enjoyed a steadier, but not always brilliant, film career. In silent cinema, no Italian film personality increased his popularity or became a star by going to Hollywood. The pole of attraction was still the Old Continent.

Examining the roles of these men from the perspectives of nationality, social type, and importance, it emerges that they did not actually play Italian or Italian American characters[29]—although this amounted to a dislocation, rather than a negation, given that they usually embodied European characters. Their class and professional prestige brought Manetti and Carminati more substantial roles on upper-class sets, but mostly as antagonists.

These actors left Italy in the years 1924 and 1925, at the peak of the crisis in European cinema.[30] Perhaps they had been waiting in the hope that the Italian film industry would regain its former status, but they reached Hollywood when experimentation with sound was already beginning, so it was too late for them to build a career in silent films before speaking English would become a basic requirement.

The mystery of why so few actors—and no divas—from the Italian cinema went to silent Hollywood nevertheless remains, and there is no immediate explanation to be found in the individual stories outlined here, so it could perhaps be credited to the gap between the Italian and American cinemas and reciprocal cultural prejudices. Furthermore, Americanization implied a blurring of nationality, as in the case of the publicity stills from *Quo Vadis?* mentioned earlier. This process of cultural (ethnic as well as national) "universalization" coincided with the construction of the Hollywood studio system, now often encapsulated instead within the ahistorical concept of classical Hollywood cinema, which negates or blurs its status as a national cinema even in the very phase of its "Americanization."

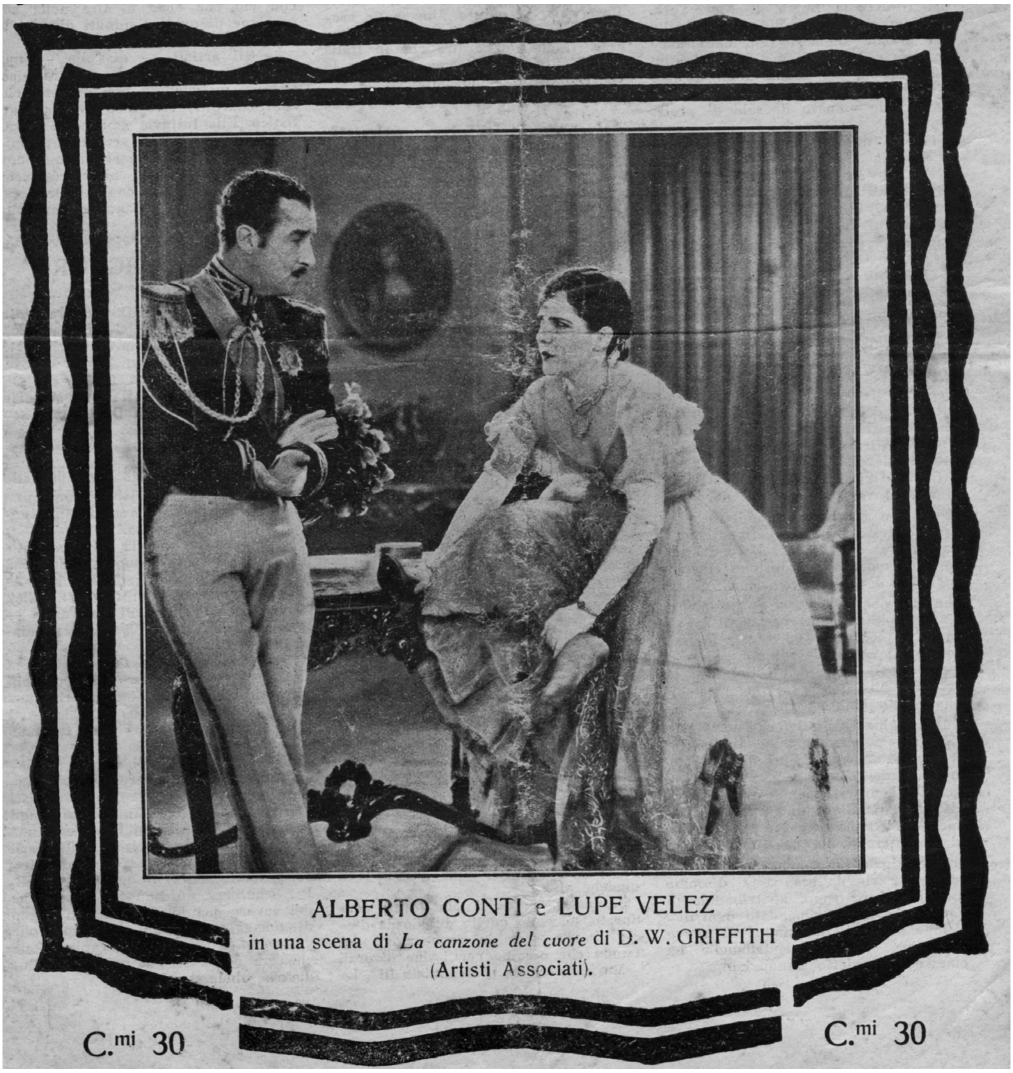
Given the limited number of Italian film actors during the silent era in Hollywood, their scant professional impact and their mobility, the fact that they were there at all has largely gone unnoticed on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Outsiders

The credits of American silent films also included Italian personalities who had neither a background or documented experience in Italian theater and film nor experience on the immigrant stage. Various examples come to mind, such as the aristocrats Albert Conti and Mario Carillo (born Caracciolo), the hard-to-pin-down Gino Corrado, and Rodolfo Valentino. Since it is not possible to consider them within the *cultura italiana dello spettacolo*, they are included here as "outsiders."

ALBERT CONTI

"Albert Conti Steps into the Spotlight," proclaimed *The Film Spectator* (June 9, 1928) in a review of *The Magnificent Flirt* (1928) with Florence Vidor. "He reveals himself as another Menjou, but with a sense of comedy more marked than that of Adolphe," writes the reviewer. "In every scene he proves what judges of screen acting have known for a long time, that he is one of the most finished artists in Hollywood." Described by Gianni Puccini as "a handsome, tall, and rather dignified man, with a perennial line of sadness on his forehead" (fig. 2.5).[31] Conti (Trieste 1887–Hollywood 1967)—also known as Alberto dei conti di Cedassamare—was an aristocrat from Trieste (adjacent to Austria) who had squandered



ALBERTO CONTI e LUPE VELEZ
in una scena di *La canzone del cuore* di D. W. GRIFFITH
(Artisti Associati).

C.mi 30 C.mi 30

Figure 2.5. Albert Conti with Lupe Velez.

his inheritance on an extravagant cosmopolitan life style. According to Puccini, “He was in America at the worst moment [of his decline] and entered the world of film, warmly welcomed thanks to his aristocratic qualities.” While Puccini takes for granted, as do most sources, that Conti was an Italian aristocrat and started acting in the United States, other sources consider him Austrian and state that he was already a performer by the time he reached Hollywood. For example, a biography in the *New York World-Telegram* reported that after his studies in Graz (Austria) “the stage claimed him when the university gates closed behind him. For a number of years, he was just another actor, although he did manage to attach himself to repertory companies that traveled extensively. One of these tours lasted four years, playing the smallest towns in deepest Russia.”[32] A studio biography also furnished a detailed military profile of Conti, including his honorable discharge from the Austrian army at the end of World War I, adding, “With conditions in Austria unfavorable to a former officer of the Imperial army, Conti came to America, arriving in New York in September 1919."[33] While there is a constant problem with sources as regards the biographies of these traveling players, the issue of nationality becomes problematic for people born in the Italian territories of the Habsburg Empire. Conti's role as an officer of the Austrian army does not preclude *Italianità* on his part as it was not a matter of choice before World War I, but an obligation within the Empire. However, one wonders whether the theater company he traveled to Russia with was Italian or Austrian.

The Hollywood inclination for myth-making, constructing the profile of a performer from his or her roles and vice versa (he in fact portrayed several Austrian officers on screen) does not help. Defining a national identity in Central Europe has always been difficult, given the region's multilayered cultures which used to incorporate multiple nationalities, religions, and ethnicities up to the catastrophic explosion of World War I. An example, by way of comparison, could be Paul Henreid: born in Trieste in 1906 into a Viennese family, educated in Austria, and "discovered" by Max Reinhardt as an actor, he could definitely not claim to be an Italian performer, whereas Conti preferred to be identified as such.

After trying a series of occupations, he read an ad in a Los Angeles paper: "WANTED: man who has authentic proof of having been an officer in the Austrian army during the war, for research work. Must present discharge papers." And Erich von Stroheim hired him as a consultant for *Merry-Go-Round* (1923). In his debut, Conti played the elegant Baron Rudi, the friend of the count who had seduced Agnes. On the set, he also was a military advisor in the field of Austrian uniforms and manners. In Stroheim's *The Merry Widow*, Conti played prince Danilo's adjutant; in Lubitsch's *Monte Carlo*, the master of ceremonies, and in *The Eagle* (alongside Valentino), he was Kuschka, the benevolent (and slightly cynical) Cossack officer who consoles the Czarina and saves the Black Eagle from capital punishment.

Although Conti was much taller than Menjou and his elegance middle-European rather than French, seeing just a few film clips would confirm the *Film Spectator* reviewer's claim that he could be more effective in comedy than his French rival, and that he was in general "a better actor than most of his fellow Habsburg Empire expatriates" as Wikipedia maintains. His official filmography included 112 titles, spanning from silent to sound, mostly in small but significant roles. With his elegant look and an air of magnificent decadence, Conti looked like a character from a short story by Joseph Roth, often appearing on screen as an officer, without Stroheim's rigidity, but more as a debonair skeptic or a womanizer who actually cared about women, as in Pirandello's sound adaptation *As You Desire Me* in which he played a captain with the good fortune to seduce Maria-Greta Garbo. He also played the producer in the lively *Show People* (King Vidor, 1928) with Marion Davies and was one the main characters in *Saturday's Children*, a flapper comedy directed by Italian American Gregory La Cava,

With the arrival of sound, his career declined. He quit acting in 1942, but he remained within the industry, employed in the wardrobe department at MGM. Indeed, the role of these actors in Hollywood was not limited to loaning their bodies as performers, but they could also offer their services as consultants on matters of European (or Italian) costumes and traditions, or on issues involving etiquette and uniforms: an actor, already a cultural mediator per se, could be used to ensure authenticity in a wider sense.

MARIO CARACCIOLO

Another aristocrat who hovers on the American silent screens was Neapolitan Mario Caracciolo, who appeared in the credits as Mario Carillo (Naples 1894–Pennsylvania 1974). In Peter Bogdanovich's interview book, John Ford, when discussing silent cinema, still remembered Caracciolo (never officially credited in his films) and shared a rather amusing anecdote about him:

> There was a fellow named Mario Caraciollo [*sic*], called himself Mario Carillio [*sic*]; he came over here with Valentino; he'd been a captain in the Italian Army, but he wanted to be an actor. . . . I'd have him do gamblers—he was so handsome, all dressed up, dealing the cards. In one picture, he was the leader of a posse chasing Carey. We were out on location and it was a very rough ride, so we got the stuntmen ready to do the shot. Mario came over to me and said, "I am lousy." I said, "No. What's the matter?" . . . He points to the stuntman who was dressed up like him "Then, who is that man playing my part?" I said, "Oh, that's a double . . . He's going to ride for you." "Why?" "He's a cowboy, he's used to do this." . . . [W]e got the shot ready and when I said "Action," my God, out dashed *two* gamblers. Well, one of them was superb: he hit that hill and slid his horse down, rode up the next hill and slid the horse down. It was Mario. . . . Turned out he was the leader of a famous Italian riding team. . . . Years later my family and I were taking a trip to Italy, and as we were coming into Gibraltar an announcement was made that lunch would be three quarters of an hour late, because His Excellency, the Italian Ambassador to Spain, the Duke of so-and-so, the Marquis of so-and-so, the Grand Bailiff of the Holy Orders and all that sort of thing, was coming on board to travel with us as far as Naples. . . . So we went up on deck, and all of the officers were in white uniform with medals, the band was there and the velvet ropes so that he could make his entrance. Pretty soon a British Admiral's barge sailed up—all polished and everything, flying the British and the Italian flags, and out stepped the handsomest man I ever seen. . . . He came aboard and took the salute—we were in the front row—and he was walking by, he stopped suddenly, and looked at me. "Jack" he yelled. "How's that sonnafebeech Harry Carey?" And I said, "Fine, Mario, I guess—but he's dead."[34]

Ford's account does not match the Neapolitan aristocrat's filmography, but it does give a sense of Hollywood's fascination with the style of the Italian nobility. Mario Caracciolo did not arrive in Hollywood with Valentino, even if, credited as Carillo, he did have a part in Niblo's *The Eagle* (as the French tutor whose identity Vladimir steals to kidnap Mascha). He had been a diplomat—according to Kevin Brownlow, a military attaché,[35] but research at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Italy has given contradictory results, since an aristocrat named Mario Caracciolo (from the Neapolitan aristocratic family) was indeed in the United States, but the years do not correspond with all of Carillo's credits (fig. 2.6).

With his jet-black hair, his mustache à la Menjou, and elegant bearing, Mario Carillo played a vast number of aristocrats in secondary roles, albeit in films directed by top

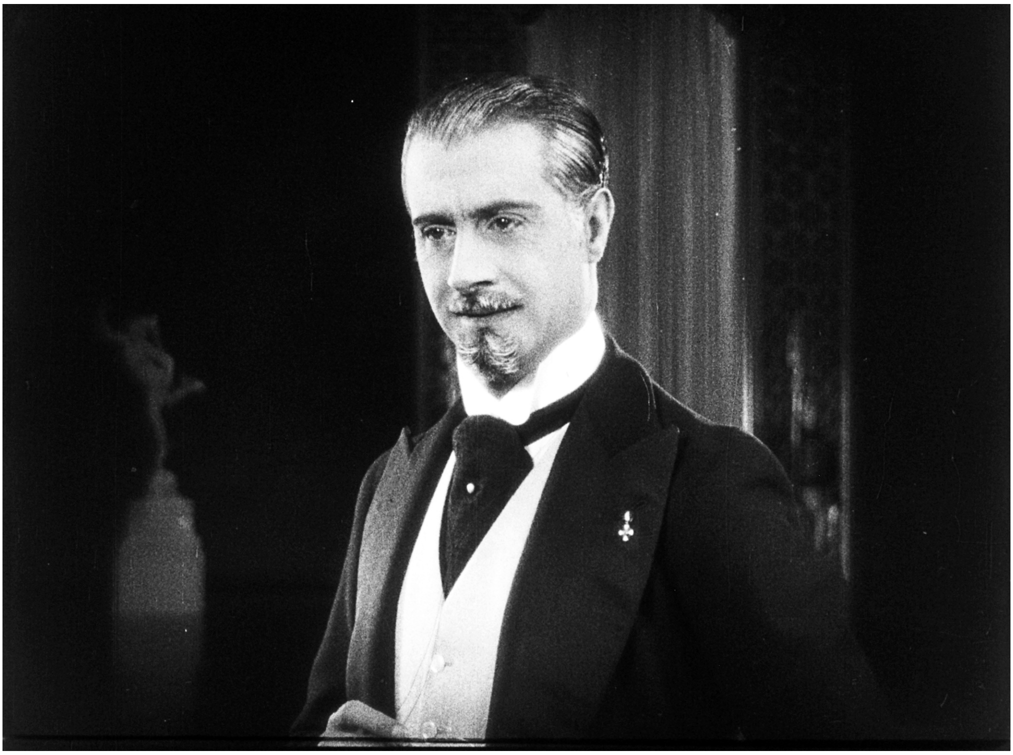


Figure 2.6. Mario Carillo (Caracciolo) in Jack Conway's *The Only Thing* (1925).

filmmakers such as Herbert Brenon (*A Stage Romance* was his first credit), Alan Crosland (*Slim Shoulders* and *The Snitching Hour*), Jack Conway (*The Prisoner* and *The Only Thing*), Ernst Lubitsch (he was the butler in *Rosita*, with Mary Pickford) and King Vidor (*His Hour*, by scandalous writer Eleonor Glyn). He also played for Italian American director Robert Vignola as a *maître d'hotel* in *Déclassée* and for William deMille in *Lost: A Wife* (1925) with Adolphe Menjou (and De Liguoro).

In the mid-1920s, he also played adventurous figures in action films set in Alaska or in Canada, where he could show off his horsemanship, or appeared in high society dramas such as *Diplomacy* (Marshall Neilan, 1926); he even played the king of Spain, in love with seductress Garbo in *The Torrent* (Monta Bell, 1926). He was a duelist in *Time to Love* (Frank Tuttle, 1927) a farce with Raymond Griffith, then the elegant husband in *Venus of Venice* (Marshall Neilan, 1927), and he worked with his compatriot Gravina in *How to Handle Women* (William Craft, 1928). His name would disappear from American film credits after the introduction of sound.

Carillo looks like a Hollywood legend constructed by a publicity department. His image evokes an imaginary Italy, full of aristocrats, valiant knights, and skilled swordsmen, like the impoverished noblemen who went to seek their fortune in America in the 1800s. His reappearance on board ship as the Italian ambassador to Spain in Ford's account seems to belong more to the director's inclination to "print the legend" (as in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*) than an accurate report. Not much else is known about Carillo-Caracciolo, apart from his elegant image in film and a rather conspicuous filmography of thirty-four titles in six years. This lack of information confirms how the historiography on the two sides of the Atlantic was beset by prejudice, to the extent that an Italian aristocrat could have had a significant career in Hollywood and return home without receiving any attention from Italian film historians and critics.

GINO CORRADO LISERANI

Gino Corrado Liserani (Pisa 1893–Los Angeles 1982) has appeared in 355 films, but the biographical information about him is scarce. He (probably) came from a rich family involved in international commerce, and apparently traveled to Peru before moving to the United States. The few American print sources that mention him provide conflicting information and there is only one interview, given in his old age (now published on the Internet), in which he claimed that he had emigrated with his family when he was seven and started his career with Griffith in *Intolerance* (1916) as a stuntman.[36]

Between 1916 and 1923, Gino Corrado changed his name to Eugene Corey—an Americanized name which continued to appear in credits even at a later date, but in the subsequent career he prevalently used his Italian name. In the early period, he made hundreds of films, mostly shorts, even playing a few Italian characters. He appeared in Cecil B. DeMille's *Adam's Rib*, *The Ten Commandments*, and *Volga Boatman*. In *Flaming Youth* (J. F. Dillon, 1923) with Colleen Moore, he played musician Leo Stenak, who convinces the girl to follow him on a cruise to the tropical seas; he also had an uncredited role in Murnau's *Sunrise* among several other major films.

One of Corrado's most important silent roles was Aramis in the intense (almost noirish) *Iron Mask* (Allan Dwan, 1929) with Douglas Fairbanks, figuring on-screen in duels and acrobatic scenes, but also in close-ups, matching the acting style of the American star, both as an excellent athlete and competent actor. Reviewing *The Golden Bridle*, *Motion Picture News* noted: "Gino Corrado provides an interesting characterization of a pompous and weak Spanish captain," dueling and horse riding, thus confirming his suitability for this type of light action film, and the attention his performances received.[37]

Corrado also made a large number of talkies, especially comedies, but mostly in minor roles: he actually set a record for the number of waiters he played. According to the Trivia section of the IMDB website, Corrado is the only performer to appear in the three American classics: *Gone with the Wind*, *Citizen Kane*, and *Casablanca*, albeit in the uncredited role of a waiter. In *Citizen Kane*, Corrado appears in a nightclub scene where the journalist goes to interview Susan Alexander for the first time.[38]

HENRY ARMETTA

Henry Armetta (Palermo 1888–San Diego 1945) was a boy when he "stowed away on a freighter bound for Boston."[39] After a series of typical immigrant vicissitudes, he reached New York and became a valet at Lambs Club, assisting famous stage star Raymond Hitchcock. This job gave him the opportunity to practice singing and performing for six years when he joined William Farnum's company which led to a film contract with William Fox and work at the Fort Lee studios in New Jersey. In 1915, Armetta made his film debut with Farnum in *The Nigger* and played a Mexican in the western *The Plunderer*, both directed by Edgar Lewis. He also appeared in a few comedy shorts, played the jester in Brenon's *The Eternal Sin* (film adaptation of Victor Hugo's *Lucretia Borgia*, made in 1917). According to an unconfirmed item in *Modern Screen*, director Gordon Edwards greatly appreciated his work in *Silent Command* (1923), a western with Buck Jones, and invited him to Italy to appear in *Nero* and *The Shepherd King*, albeit there is no documentation for this (unlikely) trip.[40]

Armetta got his real film break from Frank Borzage, who had been struck by the way he had played the small part of army cook in *Seventh Heaven* (1927) and offered him the role of Mascetto, the circus owner "with a soft heart but a bad temper," in *Street Angel*, in which Armetta improvised his peculiar walk, an "off-balanced waddle," as the *New York Times* critic Frank Nugent defined it.[41] Before sound, he also played the bartender in Hawks's *A Girl in Every Port* (1928), but his career took off mostly in the 1930s, when he played a series of characters representing the Italian stereotype in classical Hollywood cinema, clocking up 167 credits.

Sometimes, just like in the movies, success knocked unexpectedly at the door of someone who was busy doing something else, as happened to boxer-wrestler Bull Montana, born Luigi Montagna (Voghera 1887–Los Angeles 1950), who appeared in about seventy films. He emigrated at a very early age and worked first in a quarry and then in a coal mine. In order to improve his situation, he put the muscles he had built on his job to good use in that particularly theatrical of sports: boxing. He won several fights and became the personal trainer of Jack Dempsey and Douglas Fairbanks, who, in 1917, introduced him to the movies in Emerson's *In Again Out Again*.

During the silent film era, Bull Montana played Abdullah the strangler in Ford's *The Girl in Number 29* (1920) and Dago Red, a typical Italian criminal, in *Crazy to Marry* (James Cruze, 1921) with Fatty Arbuckle. In 1922, he also made a series of shorts, produced by Hunt Stromberg at Metro and played an incredibly funny Richelieu in the parody *The Three-Must-Get-Theres* with Max Linder (1923). He played the ape-man in *The Lost World* (Henry Hoyt, 1925), a precursor of *Jurassic Park*, and Ali in *The Son of the Sheik* (George Fitzmaurice, 1926). After the arrival of the talkies, he worked mostly in independent B-movies. Montana was the first of a series of Italian boxers to appear in American cinema, both as characters and actors, even if he did not specialize in "strong man" roles, but he was particularly successful in comedy, even playing the chauffeur in *Manhattan Madness* (John McDermott, 1925) with Jack Dempsey.

Rodolfo (Rudolph) Valentino

Rodolfo Guglielmi alias Rudolph Valentino (Castellaneta 1895–New York 1926) had no theater experience before emigrating. Therefore, he is an "outsider" too in this account, but he occupies a unique role in the creation of silent (male) film stardom and the relationship between his image and national identity.[42]

Rodolfo (as written in Italian) Valentino was one of the many immigrants to board a transatlantic liner, full of hope and trepidation, in the peak emigration year of 1913. As his brother Albert later explained, he did not leave Italy because of economic necessity, but in a spirit of adventure.[43] He had a variety of jobs in the United States, but he wrote to his family using Waldorf Astoria stationery to reassure them of the success of his adventure, as he began the work of constructing his own legend.

He first set foot on stage as a "taxi dancer" in New York and, according to some sources, his first appearance on screen was as a dancer in D. W. Griffith's *The Battle of the Sexes* (1914).[44] Little is known about the early years of his career; any reconstruction would have to be based on a posteriori identification, the rescue of obscure titles, or the certification of his unlikely presence in Hollywood before 1917. Variations of his name in the credits as Rodolpho de Valentina or Rudolph de Valentino only add to the confusion. He did not Americanize his full name but, contrary to the most common practice among Italian performers, he dropped his last name, Guglielmi—difficult to pronounce for English speakers—and Anglicized his first name (to Rudolph). For his last name, he used part of his ancestral family name, "di Valentina d'Antonguella," suggesting an aristocratic origin that exerted a special charm on the American public.[45] By the same token, however, this choice may also have instigated WASP prejudice against European aristocracy perceived as parasitic.

For three years, his film roles were limited to dancers, slick villains, and the "rival in love," and he was presented as a "new style of heavy," as seductive as he was destructive.[46] These roles, however, did not provide him with an original "film personality"[47] until he met June Mathis, screenwriter and producer at Metro, who forged his career.[48] She insisted on Valentino getting the role of Julio in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (*Rex Ingram, 1921), constructing the adaptation of Ibáñez's popular novel around his character. His languid and passionate eyes, veiled with sadness, the sensual grace of his movements, but also his approach to acting, which was never banal in this early stage in his career, made him a star.

His fame grew with *The Conquering Power* (Ingram, 1921), an adaptation of Balzac's *Eugenie Grandet*, which emphasized his role as a sentimental victim of the economic interests of bourgeois society: a theme repeated in the *Deco* adaptation of *Camille* (Ray Smallwood, 1921) with Alla Nazimova. These changes in the characterization of Charles Grandet and Armand Duval betrayed their literary sources, where the masculine character was to some extent negative, increasing the "victimization" of his roles, but offering a new space for multifaceted identification by the audience. As a star, Valentino differed from standard American heroes, who were mostly dynamic men of action.[49] He associated erotic seduction with sentimental ethics—a melancholic reflection on the sex-affection binomial; he was never an amoral protagonist in these narratives. For instance, in the scene in *Four Horsemen* where Julio observes Marguerite taking care of her blind husband, he understands her feelings and generously decides to sacrifice his own, becoming a (humble) war hero, a man of action, but off-screen.[50] This switch, with its deep moral and spiritual connotations, attenuated the erotic and eugenic danger that WASP culture perceived in a seductiveness it associated with a despised racial/national character, in a form of "spiritualization" that was habitually applied to foreign female stars such as Greta Garbo as a way of mitigating the negative connotations of the vamp.[51]

In the 1920s, the American star system required the coupling of passion with romanticism: the seductive body had to encase a romantic soul if it were to please an audience that should not be subject to the guilt associated with unadulterated sexual desire. This philosophy underpins the magic formula that created the myth of Valentino (and Garbo) and was devised by a crowd of women screenwriters.[52] American cinema addressed such sociocultural fears by playing on sexual, gender, and ethnoracial identities through casting and performance, only rarely focusing on the issues directly in the narrative, as with Modotti in *The Tiger's Coat*. In early American films with Italian characters, the threat was not explicit, but emerged in the countless kidnappings of little girls, snatched by some foreign predator. In other films, jealousy, vendetta, and the stiletto expressed an irrational threat associated with sexual symbolism. In the 1920s this confused anxiety was channeled in the body of a foreign (Italian) performer, able to offer Americans the objects of eroticism censored by their culture, immersed in a spiritual seductiveness and gifted with special star qualities so timeless as to transform him into legendary figures. And while other stars of the silent cinema—such as Mary Pickford, Lillian Gish, and Douglas Fairbanks—today appear rooted in an innocent and almost infantile Victorian past, Garbo and Valentino are eternal icons of mass culture. Significantly enough, this enlistment of European figures to express a new sensuality in American cinema took place in the 1920s, when Hollywood was wholeheartedly engaged in imposing its "irresistible empire" on Europe.

The Sheik (George Melford, 1921) crowned Valentino as the prince of sexual imagination, the symbol of passionate and yet romantic love. It was produced by Famous Players-Lasky, where he had transferred because he was dissatisfied with how he was treated at Metro. Interviewed about his role playing an Arab, he defended this culture, which he related to his southern Italian origins—a brave but risky public statement to make at the peak of anti-immigration sentiments, in the very year that immigration quotas were imposed.[53]

His definitive acclaim as *the* male star of the 1920s came with Fred Niblo's *Blood and Sand*, in which he was seduced on screen by Nita Naldi, as he, in turn, seduced millions of female spectators. *The Young Rajah* (Philip Rosen, 1922) was written by Mathis, but in the meantime, Valentino had met another powerful female personality, Natasha Rambova (Winifred Shaunessy). His choices in affairs of the heart complicated his public image: he had married Jean Acker in 1919 and then divorced her in 1921; but when he married Rambova in 1922, he found himself embroiled in a costly law suit for bigamy because he had not complied with the California divorce laws.

His professional life was also under the stress of contractual litigation proceedings, above all because of his desire to gain more artistic control.[54] He refused to renegotiate his contract with Famous Players-Lasky and "went on strike," despite his growing debt. In reaction to his rebellion, the studios, which had control over the press image of their stars, presented his behavior as the whimsical fancy of a spoiled star, an unruly Italian. Thus, at the very peak of his career he went on a tango (and cosmetics promotion) tour with Natasha, traveling to Europe. Rambova did not have Mathis's understanding or perception of Valentino's potential as a screen star, and consigned him to repetitive roles, concentrating on décor and costumes (which were her craft) as in Olcott's *Monsieur Beaucaire*, with an abundance of lavish disguises (included female clothing), which are more interesting from a psychoanalytical point of view than they are effective within the narrative.

In *A Sainted Devil* (Joseph Henabery, 1923*)*, Valentino worked with the sensual Nita Naldi. An American actress, born Donna Dooley to an Irish family in New York, she had Latin looks and chose an Italian *nom de plume*, but avoided creating "a fixed ethnic identity in fan magazine coverage of her life and career."[55] Valentino made three films—Niblo's *Blood and Sand*, *A Sainted Devil*, and *Cobra* (Henabery, 1925)—with Naldi, who was cast as a vamp and referred to as "the female Valentino." The reversal of roles between the male Latin Lover and the (apparently Latin) vamp overturned racial and cultural expectations as the romantic sensuality of the handsome Italian was contrasted with the erotic aggressiveness of Naldi. The national component of ideological prejudice was hidden by an apparent similarity between the two because of their names ending in a vowel, but it created a tension around the definition of gender roles. The angst-ridden American culture of the Jazz Age seemed to be more afraid of the supposedly Italian woman than the authentic Italian man. At the same time, Valentino's rebellious attitudes toward the new studio system created a tension within the image of the star as presented by the studio-controlled fan magazines.

The typical American hero of silent cinema was a man of action, the westerner, riding a horse in spectacular adventures over wide open spaces, while the Latin lover languidly sought women in urban environments, lingering in upper-class salons, or frequenting the most exotic sets without being associated with any productive activity: he was either an artist, an aristocrat, or a wealthy heir; in short, a parasite. Valentino's passion for art and poetry, the aristocratic origins that studio promotion attributed to him and the wealth he accumulated as a film star thus brought the imaginary characters he played on-screen dangerously close to his personal life, or at least close to the one publicized in fan magazines.

Cobra reunited Valentino and Nita Naldi, but in this case, he portrayed an Italian aristocrat, the only Italian character he played at the height of his career. The plot was disappointingly melodramatic and stereotypical both in terms of the figure of Don Rodrigo, the penniless aristocrat employed ("by association" with his Italian origins) in an antique shop, and in the figure of Naldi, the vamp gold-digger, punished for her sins by her untimely death in a fire. Incidentally, fire is said to be one of the few possible ways to destroy a vampire.

On his return to Hollywood after a trip to Europe,[56] he accepted United Artists' offer, at last signing a satisfactory contract with a company that claimed to respect artistic freedom. In Niblo's *The Eagle*, Valentino played a romantic bandit, with a touch of the perverse in the scenes in which he becomes the object of desire of the Czarina, but above all with a self-ironic twist that makes it one of his best performances ever, with his mocking and yet seductive smile under his bandit's black mask. In 1926, he starred in *The Son of the Sheik*—his erotic role par excellence, written with the usual sensitivity toward perfecting his star personality, and again with a touch of self-conscious irony, by Frances Marion. This was to be his last role.[57]

On July 18, 1926, the *Chicago Tribune*, a McCormick paper (deeply anti-immigration), published an extremely insulting unsigned editorial, associating Valentino with the vogue for "pink powder puffs" and lamenting his effeminizing influence on American virility. The article appeared together with the news that Valentino was requesting American naturalization, which makes its timing in the newspaper particularly significant, loaded as it was with anti-Italian prejudice, stemming from an idea of masculinity rooted in a WASP gender culture of the past.[58] In addition to attacking the movies and modernity, the editorial communicates an unstated association between Valentino, lack of virility, and Italianness. As with the "Africanization" of southern Italians, this "emasculation" is also something analyzed in the writings of Italian intellectuals, in particular in Alfredo Niceforo's equation of southern Italians with a *popolo femmina*, a female people, unable to exercise restraint, overemotional, intellectually inadequate, and amoral.[59] This emasculating representation helps explain why Fascism was slow to appropriate Valentino as an icon: he was probably too ambiguous and "Hollywoodized" to represent *l'uomo nuovo fascista*—the new Fascist man, embodied by Mussolini (or Maciste). In the *Chicago Tribune* article, pacifism, effeminacy, and criminality were not directly blamed on Italians or on the movies. Rather the elements were blended together in a powerful racist mix, culminating in the wish that someone would kill Valentino (whose original surname, Guglielmi, was misspelt).

Like other racist texts of the period, it is still quite disturbing and explains the actor's fiery reactions. Not only did he challenge the journalist to a duel or a fistfight, a reaction both "masculine" and "Italian," but he also wrote a statement which appeared in the *Chicago Herald Examiner*, against this "scurrilous personal attack . . . upon me, my race, my father's name. You slur my Italian ancestry; you cast ridicule upon my Italian name."[60] Valentino had immediately recognized the racism and the anti-Italian sentiment of the editorial, and rejected it not simply as a personal offense, and not just to defend his own virility, but extending his resentment toward an offense against his "Italian ancestry."

This case bears remarkable similarities to Caruso's "zoo scandal." In both instances, the attack was centered on issues of sexual morality, expressing the American male's fear of these Italian men, of these "artistic" personalities. Such scandals were, however, mostly confined to the (WASP) middle class who read this type of press and had no effect on the popularity of the two stars with their fans and audiences.

Valentino's sexual orientation has no relevance here as his filmic sexual identity was constructed as a many-layered and even contradictory image by both movies and fan magazines. Before the memorable tango sequence in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, Valentino had been associated with dance, and a dancer evokes grace, femininity, even homosexuality. But the Tango, famously based on the ability of the man to lead and control the woman, was a masculine type of dance. Elaborate costumes and elegant clothing on- and off-screen are conventionally associated with fashion consumerism induced by the movies in the women's sections of department stores, but Valentino introduced a new, influential, approach to the idea of fashion for men in the 1920s.

We know that physical training was an important part of Valentino's activities, as Jacqueline Reich has argued in her essay on the actor as a "strong man," analyzing his publication of a volume on physical fitness (*How You Can Keep Fit*), which fell perfectly within the bounds of the American model of masculinity.[61] Right from the start of his career, Valentino had exhibited his torso on-screen, with his well-sculpted muscles, appearing either in a bathing suit or stripped to the waist or in a rough sailor's singlet in *Moran of the Lady Letty* (George Melford, 1922). In several films, he showed athletic skills while jumping from balconies or fencing. In addition to riding horses in the desert or in the Russian steppe on screen, in fan magazines he was often shown horse-riding at Falcon Lair, his beautiful villa in Beverly Hills. Indeed, some of his abilities were not unlike those of Douglas Fairbanks.

The construction of Valentino as "every husband's rival" in films and in fan magazines was a complex architecture of gender identity. In WASP culture, "sensitive" and "passionate" were attributes associated with femininity, but Valentino embodied the powerful contradiction of a man who could redefine these adjectives, favoring the transition from Victorian values to the Jazz Age. The crucial cultural problem was that the sentimental core of American cinema was drawn from Victorian culture, and not, as in European cinema, from Romanticism; thus, it had feminine connotations, as in Ann Douglas's interpretation of the Victorian "feminization" of American culture.[62]

The complex cultural phenomenon Valentino represented was built on his acting style, his eyes and his "spiritual beauty," that is, on his use of the face and body as ideal assets within the language of silent cinema. Especially at the beginning of his career, his acting was rich in complex nuances. He used his whole body to express feelings: for example, the imperceptible movement of his shoulders and the lowering of his head, seen from the back in the instant he understands he has lost the woman he loves in *Four Horsemen*. *A Sainted Devil* includes a sequence in which Valentino explodes with rage, demonstrating his ability as a performer, gaining the praise of critics both in the United States and in Italy.[63] His eyes could communicate sadness, shine with rage, or sparkle with irony; his physical prowess and his nuanced facial expressions in *The Eagle* were much appreciated at the time. Indeed, the greatest injustice done to him has been the lack of recognition of his gifts as a silent film actor.

Some of the films in the latter part of Valentino's career include a few other Italian performers: former boxer Bull Montana as a French waiter in *Four Horsemen* and Ali the mountebank in *The Son of the Sheik*, not to mention the aristocrats Albert Conti and Mario Carillo in *The Eagle*. Yet there were very few Italian names, almost as if the studios wanted to distance the star from the immigrant community, casting only "outsiders," not performers from Little Italy, at his side. These outsiders, albeit not trained as actors, offered the advantage of a sober and naturalistic acting style, well harmonized with Valentino's own, more direct than might be expected, culturally speaking, from "expressive" Italians.

Valentino was perceived as Italian by American audiences, but his films served a more complex function; as William Uricchio argues:

> [They demonstrated] most of all that the characteristics of violence and even brutality so often attributed to Italian immigrants could be redefined in terms of virility and passion, . . . [offering] the possibility to reinterpret the miserable conditions of the immigrant as the

> tragic corruption of a fundamentally noble person, reconnecting and in a certain sense, transcending (derogatory) discourse on immigrants and (laudatory) discourse on the greatness of Italian culture. This conjunction constitutes a loophole between two worlds, giving birth to a romantic structure of the perception of otherwise unacceptable behaviors. . . . Virile yet vulnerable, wrapped in the mystery of a lost past, of noble origins despite their actual condition or the appearance, it is probable that the particular constructions of *Italianità* in America contributed to the definition and to the success of the figure of Valentino.[64]

It is difficult to establish how great a role Valentino's national identity played in his career. His popularity with Italian immigrant audiences is the result of a complex process, because, as Bertellini argues on the subject of the contemporary popularity of Mussolini and Valentino, "the actual experiences of immigration, urbanization, and displacement allowed the coexistence and, at times, a dialectical appeasement between divergent models of Latin virility and heroism."[65]

These two models of virility, however, played out differently in Italy, where the only male star of Italian silent cinema was Mussolini. As Victoria de Grazia argues, "Mussolini was the first contemporary head of state to vaunt his sexuality: stripped to the waist to bring in the harvest or donning the sober black shirt of a *condottiero* [leader] before FIAT workers, decked out as a pilot, boat commander, or virtuoso violinist to show off his Renaissance skills. . . . [He] was as vain as any matinee idol pandering to his 'female' publics."[66]

But Valentino was not competing with Il Duce, as only a few of his films were distributed in Italy at the time. In the summer of 1923 the actor returned to Italy, "discovering that whereas in England and France they welcomed him as an international celebrity, in Italy [that had] just become Fascist, his films were almost unknown."[67] Indeed, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (distributed in 1921 in the United States) was only shown in Italy in 1923 and *The Sheik* in 1924.

Late in starting, Valentino's popularity in Italy risked disappearing just as quickly when he applied for American citizenship. An article in the daily Trieste paper, *Il Piccolo*, reported on January 7, 1926, that Fascists protested at a theater that was showing *Young Rajah*; the protestors reportedly delivered a fervent patriotic speech, defining him as "a selfish, grasping individual who renounces his country, his flag and his origins in exchange for a miserable handful of dollars."[68]

In reaction to these remonstrations, Valentino wrote a letter, published in *L'Impero*, Rome, on March 12, 1926, in which he passionately defended his position, adopting the florid rhetoric typical of the time.[69] He started by explaining why he was applying for American citizenship: "I have been in America for many years now, and I am indebted to it because, from the outset, it has welcomed my humble efforts in the artistic field with the liveliest sympathy, and has given me daily and continuous evidence of the warmest and most fervent support." He justified his decision, aligning himself with the emigrant masses, citing "reasons obvious to the millions of Italians who have lived in America at length, and who participate in the life of this glorious Republic, never forgetting the Mother Country." And yet he passionately declared his love for Italy: "Nobody loves and has always loved the country where I was born more than I, the country to which I am connected by the strongest bonds of affection and blood, tender memories of my childhood and my ancestors; *nobody has felt and feels more than I the sacred pride and the privilege of being born Italian*." The references to "affection and blood" are important because they demonstrate that the union of the two terms within the concept of Italian citizenship was a widely shared value, combining the Risorgimento view of the "Italian sentiment" with a blood-based interpretation of national identity. Valentino was speaking in the name of all emigrants: "I feel in my soul, as do millions of Italians who live here, always mindful of the home country, that these two affections [for Italy and the United States] do not elide or cancel each other out but contemplate and strengthen each other in one harmonious sentiment." This is indeed an effective articulation of the special nature of the migrant's position. The actor, however, felt the need to further defend his reasoning, anticipating possible criticism regarding the boycott: "It is not commercial interest that guides this sincere and fervent affection for the Mother Country . . . since the benefits that may be obtained in Italy are negligible in comparison with the world market." His argument runs once more at a more general and idealistic level, having identified the problematic relationship between migration and Italy: "I know, and I like to believe, that the great majority of our compatriots do not know that millions of Italians, naturalized as American citizens, contribute daily through their energy and industry in that distant land to make the name of Italy greater and more respected." That Valentino should feel the need to make this point confirms the feeling of abandonment that many Italian emigrants experienced, in his case heightened by the discovery that he was less popular in Italy than in the rest of the world. A few months later, the actor was dead, and only then did his legend manifest itself also in Italy.

The resentment toward Valentino, as attested to by these events, was symptomatic of the Italian attitude toward Italians abroad, constituting quite a riddle for historical interpretation, given that Valentino could easily have been appropriated as a positive symbol of Italian culture. Obviously, the issue of citizenship was very important for Fascist autarchic nationalism, but the lack of Italian interest in the work and role of this homegrown star in American cinema predated this contradictory situation. Nationalism and Fascism explain these attitudes only in part, also offering grounds for anti-American sentiment, but the contradictions remain, considering that by the late 1920s Italian screens had been quite taken over by American films. Only later, in the Fascist imperial era, did Gianni Puccini in his often-cited 1937 article on Italians in Hollywood, passionately recognize Valentino's Italianness:

> It is hard to find an Italian more Italian than Valentino; he clearly bore within him the particular characteristics of his race, as life-blood destined to revive stories and characters even very distant from the sentimental and historical spheres. The French Beaucaire, the Russian hero of *The Eagle*, the Spanish toreador of *Blood and Sand*, the Arab of *The Sheik*, all changed name and latitude but always remained Italian; the human sympathy that emanated from those eyes and from that sad and brave smile could in no way be the result of makeup beneath a busby or a turban.

Here race is used as an Italian category, which allows for the appropriation of Valentino's body and his features, attributing his "human sympathy" and his warm expressivity to his Italian blood, to his "race."

From a cultural point of view, Valentino was not an "Italian performer"—he was not an actor who had come from the Italian stage or from Italian cinema, but an emigrant performing in American films. Since it was impossible to claim that Valentino's influence was the result of his Italian professional status, Puccini could only refer to Valentino's *italianità* in terms of his birth and blood. The particular development of the concept of race on the part of Fascism did not (yet) appear threatening, but it was an ideological trap underlying this narrative on both sides of the Atlantic.

On August 15, 1926, Rodolfo Valentino died of peritonitis. His funeral has lived on among the media epics of stardom, with its mass manifestations of desperate fanaticism, including several suicides. The train with his coffin crossed America from New York to Los Angeles, greeted by weeping crowds.[70] Numerous obituaries presented him as an immigrant who had become an idol of the masses thanks to Hollywood. The star system was the wand that transformed the Italian emigrant into a star, a quintessential product of the American dream, which had allowed him to move from his "low" ethnoracial origins to the status of world celebrity.

Caruso and Valentino were absolute stars with a charismatic impact on the popular imaginary, beyond the limits of time. Valentino was the best product of a film industry that made him a star even though only two years earlier it had been unable to devise an effective film image for Caruso. They were stars, but also tragic figures, and both of them died young: Caruso at 45, Valentino at 31. Their early deaths were the result of unexpected illness, taking its toll on their almost idolized bodies; their deaths also took on dramatic proportions, leading to almost fanatical mourning, surrounding them with the aura of legends commemorated at mass funerals. Caruso and Valentino were rich migrants, but the odor of (Little) Italy still clung to their expensive topcoats. Traveling players and Italian migrants voyaged on the same liners, albeit on different decks, but upon their arrival in the United States, they were all "Italians abroad."

One year after Valentino's death, in August 1927, two Italians died in Boston—Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, executed on the electric chair. They were arrested in April 1920 and accused of robbery and murder. After a controversial trial, they were sentenced to death in July 1921,[71] the same year that Valentino rose to stardom with *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.* The way these two parabolas overlap chronologically—both ending in drama and both with Italian names hitting the headlines for different reasons in the international media—perfectly expresses the contradictions surrounding Italians in American culture.

Within this collective and fragmented experience, Italian performers from the immigrant stage or from Italian cinema contributed to the production of American silent films, bringing with them their versatile and naturalistic acting style and the prestige associated with Italian stage traditions, which would begin a new and thus far undetected process of introducing Italian *cultura dello spettacolo* into American cinema, destined to continue for more than a century. But this interaction was not favored by institutional relations. In

Hollywood, the careers of actors coming from the Italian cinema were generally less continuous and intense than those of actors from the immigrant stage or those coming to Hollywood as outsiders. These professionals, probably influenced by the cultural attitudes of the world of the Italian cinema, did not integrate into the American film scene. It took an "outsider" such as Valentino to make it to stardom, to become a legend.

In the interwar period however, the dynamics between the two film industries began to change, and the most evident developments in American filmmaking would take place in Italy itself, as discussed in the next chapter.

THREE

A Filmic Grand Tour: American Silent Films “Made in Italy”

> There was dirty water in the gutters and between rough cobblestones; a marshy vapor from the *campagna*, a sweat of exhausted cultures tainted the morning air.
>
> —FRANCIS S. FITZGERALD, *Tender Is the Night*[1]

Between 1914 and 1926 American film companies or American filmmakers went to Italy to shoot at least thirteen films in different locations. The list includes Edwin Porter and Hugh Ford’s *The Eternal City* (1915); the three “Italian films” by Herbert Brenon (*La principessa misteriosa*, *Il colchico e la rosa*, and *Beatrice*, 1920); Gordon Edward’s two historical productions, *Nero* and *The Shepherd King* (1922); George Fitzmaurice’s *The Man from Home* (1922) and *The Eternal City* (1923); Henry Kolker’s *Sant’Ilario* (1923); Henry King’s *The White Sister* (1923) and *Romola* (1924); Fred Niblo’s *Ben Hur* (1925); and Rex Ingram’s *Mare Nostrum* (1926). The complex transnational exchanges that occurred have not been studied, even though they represent very relevant personal and professional experiences for the people involved.

On Christmas Eve 1924, for instance, actress Carmel Myers met Francis Scott Fitzgerald, who was holding the usual glass of wine in his hand, in the sumptuous hall of the Hotel Excelsior in Rome. The actress was in the “eternal city” to play Iras in the grandiose production of *Ben Hur*, together with other compatriots of the film crew, lost in Roman idleness. The writer was uneasy having to explain the black eye inflicted on him by the Italian police, when they arrested him for a brawl with a taxi driver. But his American friends from the film world would have fared no better, had they been forced to explain the delays in the shooting of *Ben Hur*. Fitzgerald and Myers had met on the set of the film, where the writer had visited the spectacular mise en scène.[2] This, in Rome, was an accidental encounter, but not that unusual at the time, which saw a new breed of Americans circulating in the beautiful country in an updated version of the Grand Tour.

According to Joseph Cosco, “By the 1890s, travelers had become tourists and the Grand Tour had become a middle-class package tour. Rome was getting some thirty thousand American visitors annually. During the nineteenth century, nearly every major American artist and writer, and a host of lesser artists and intellectuals traveled to, often lived in, and nearly always wrote about or made art of Italy and Italians.”[3] However, American writers and artists lived this experience through the prism of their own preformed image of Italy. As Ann Douglas notes, they expected “not a country but a museum, not life but art.”[4] Indeed, American impressionists painted all sorts of landscapes, ruins, ragged children, and beautiful Italian girls, but never industrial buildings or urban settings as they would have done in the United Kingdom or the United States.[5] They continued to project an Arcadian image of Italy onto a reality that was, in fact, undergoing rapid transformation. As Van Wyck Brooks puts it, for these Americans, “the whole country was like a stage, while the Italians seemed to them like actors playing parts in some poetic drama.”[6] An image of a theatrical Italy runs through numerous accounts not only in travel literature, but also in reports on filmmaking in Italy. The filtered and detached character of this vision of Italy and Italians bolstered a double stereotype—one of the spontaneous ability to play on stage, one of artifice—of acting rather than being.

Furthermore, in Cosco’s view, “American travelers, even the mid–nineteenth-century expatriate artists in Florence and Rome, had little true contact with the Italians, and their overall attitude was based on superficial, often negative stereotypes.”[7] In fact, the interaction between the representatives of coeval Italian literature, as well as art and film, and Americans was always limited, which prevented a rich transcultural exchange. The American writer’s experience in Italy was filtered through negative stereotypes deeply rooted in WASP literature and handed down in their writings with little variation.

Laboring on the construction of its own national identity and almost immediately acting according to the tenets of the new imperial project, the United States addressed the question of the Italians and other so-called new immigrants through the filters of race and prejudice.[8] Italomania peaked, it is true, but under the impact of the big wave of immigrants in the nineteenth century, Italophilia quickly turned into Italophobia.[9]

Transatlantic travel intensified during the interwar period, and American writers, musicians, artists, and filmmakers visited Europe for work or to take up residence for extended periods, while important European film artists, discouraged by the serious crisis besetting their national film industries, emigrated to Hollywood. Europe became a favorite setting for the plots of American films; stories that freely indulged sexual, class, and national fantasies. What is less known is that American studios not only invaded European screens and co-opted European personnel, but they also coproduced or made movies in Italy, France, and later, Germany. But was this the Europeanization of Hollywood, or the Hollywoodization of Europe? Probably both. As de Grazia argues: “American hegemony was not forged here . . . nor in Hollywood, the world capital of cinema, nor in New York City, the world’s emerging center, nor in Washington, D.C., the nation’s political capital. . . . America’s hegemony was built on European territory. The Old World was where the United States turned its power as the premier consumer society into the dominion that came from being universally recognized as the fountainhead of modern consumer practices.”[10] As early as July 10, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson had unveiled this project at the first World's Salesmanship Congress: "Let your thoughts and your imagination run abroad throughout the whole world, and with the inspiration of the thought that you are Americans and are meant to carry liberty and justice and the principles of humanity wherever you go, go out and sell goods that will make the world more comfortable and more happy, and convert them to the principles of America."[11] And Hollywood led the way. But transnational relations imply complex patterns of action and reaction—exchanges and conflicts that national film histories have ignored. In order to affirm their national character, the United States had to feed on and digest European culture at a time when Italomania was still rife, making Italy the first stop in any touristic and aesthetic experience.[12]

American Filmmaking in Italy

Italy was the ideal setting for a cinematographic Grand Tour,[13] but not all the American silent films made there have been identified. The *AFI* Catalogs (1911–1930) list around twenty films with synopses referring to Italian locations, but historical evidence for actual shooting in Italy is so far only available for Edwin Porter and Hugh Ford's *The Eternal City* (1915); the three "Italian films" by Herbert Brenon (*La principessa misteriosa*, *Il colchico e la rosa*, and *Beatrice*, 1920); Gordon Edward's two historical productions, *Nero* and *The Shepherd King* (1922); George Fitzmaurice's *The Man from Home* (1922) and *The Eternal City* (1923); Henry Kolker's *Sant'Ilario* (1923); Henry King's *The White Sister* (1923) and *Romola* (1924); Fred Niblo's *Ben Hur* (1925); and Rex Ingram's *Mare Nostrum* (1926). The dates do not necessarily reflect the order in which these films were shot. In fact, some of these pictures might have been only partially made in Italy; some might have been the offspring of touristic opportunities, improvised productions that exploited the locations with a view to manufacturing films with muddled plots upon the filmmakers' return to Hollywood. Given the international popularity of Italian historical cinema and the ready availability of monuments and ancient sites, it may seem logical to imagine that American filmmakers would have gone to Italy to shoot historical films, but only five of the films on the list are costume dramas. What stood out was the modern setting—Italy after the unification, with thematic and stylistic references to contemporary Italian melodramas such as the diva films.

After the early and unique experience of the first *Eternal City*—shot in Rome in 1914 (the same year as the spectacular *Cabiria*, made with the collaboration of national bard Gabriele D'Annunzio) when Italian cinema was still thriving—World War I constituted a watershed in the control of the world film market, with European companies being overpowered by the American film industry. This process was strategic in the American bid to establish an "irresistible empire," when "mainstream American culture intensified the commodification of foreign cultures and national differences rather than striving for their erasure."[14] In cinema, this "commodification" encouraged transatlantic exploration, or perhaps incursions, in a blend of curiosity, fascination, and repulsion. Indeed, such a complex process of transcultural interaction could not have come about without clashes, misunderstandings, and reciprocal influences and benefits—both in general and in terms of professional and personal relationships—that were beyond the collateral damage caused by the "war to end all wars."

From a historical point of view, these American productions were filmed in Italy during one of the most complex periods in its recent history—the advent of Fascism, which created a sociopolitical context that cannot be ignored even in terms of periodization.[15] The anarchist-socialist Red Week of June 1914, for example, provided the background to the making of the first *Eternal City*, and the revolutionary occupation of the factories of the Red Biennium (1919–1920) accompanied Brenon's experiences. The turbulent eve of the March on Rome and the Fascist takeover of the Italian government (1921–1923) constituted the context for the making of most of these films. *Ben Hur*, *Romola*, and *Mare Nostrum* coincided with the aftermath of the killing of Socialist leader Giacomo Matteotti (1924–1925), when the Fascist Party banned all the other political parties and went about establishing the first of the twentieth-century modern dictatorships in Europe. While only Fitzmaurice's *Eternal City* had a narrative plot explicitly dealing with Fascism, historical pictures such as *Romola* or *Ben Hur* ended up narrating the turbulent Italy of the day, with its plotting oligarchies, popular revolts, and dreams of imperial conquest seen through the filter of costume drama.

In the 1920s, the specter that was hovering over Europe and the world was the Russian revolution and its masses in revolt, so much so as to ideologically transform the masses applauding Mussolini into a positive image. In reality, in terms of mise en scène, Mussolini and Fascism loom large in the background of the entire story. A destabilizing menace during the making of the first *Eternal City*, when he was still the director of the Socialist daily paper *Avanti*, Mussolini had abandoned the pacifist position he had taken during the war in Libya and favored the country's intervention in World War I. This position was less visible in the period when the Unione Cinematografica Italiana (UCI) was attempting to overcome the industrial and institutional crisis and called in Brenon. Actually, the very group that constituted the UCI—the banks and the aristocrats who produced Italian cinema in the pre–World War I period—were responsible for introducing the iconography that Mussolini would go on to adopt: the *fasci* of an imperial Rome which expressed the nationalist spirit of the colonial war over Libya in historical jamborees, paving the way for aggressive nationalism.

It is commonly argued that Mussolini allowed American cinema to invade Italian screens because in the silent period he did not consider it ideologically dissonant. Indeed, as far back as the March on Rome (with his appearance in the second *Eternal City*) in 1922, Il Duce showed he was willing to fraternize with Hollywood in order to gain its support in constructing a positive filmic image of himself and Fascism in the United States, and therefore in the world. Indeed, through these American film productions, Hollywood could promote Italy and its dormant cinema at the same time. The documents actually show that Fascism "coproduced" these films by granting authorization and the provision of material support. This participation was never publicly stated by the regime or acknowledged by American film producers, who normally described the support they received as coming from the "Italian government" or "Italian authorities." The scarcity of scholarly interest in the relationship between Fascism and cinema and the American film in the interwar period (which is now being explored by Giorgio Bertellini, Ruth Ben Ghiat, Jacqueline Reich and others) allowed film historians to bypass this crucial but "subliminal" transatlantic interaction. The 1920s were a crucial era of worldwide transformation, but they are often represented as the decade between the first mass-armed conflict and the ideological revolutions of the 1930s, while Fascism provided significant continuity from 1922 right up to 1943.

If it can be said that Italy was in the throes of a Fascist revolution, the American context was equally tense. The Bolshevik Revolution brought with it the Red Scare, and encouraged the imposition of immigration quotas in 1921, and restrictions that were further tightened in 1924. And yet this was also the Jazz Age, the time of the Lost Generation, with the arrival of the flapper on the consumer scene and changing gender roles in society.[16]

Although the historical turbulence of the period did not appear to affect the making of these pictures at the transatlantic level, the sociopolitical conditions of the interaction may well have contributed to more production problems, inefficiencies, and cultural misunderstandings than has been acknowledged thus far.

As already mentioned, the period in which most of these pictures were shot—1919 to 1926—coincided with the sudden (but not unpredictable) decline of Italian film production on the one hand, and American cinema's rise to hegemony on the other. In the socioeconomic history of cinema, the two movements therefore represented two opposing thrusts insofar as American productions were able to take advantage of a pool of skilled Italian workers out of work because of the almost total discontinuance of any national film activities. Hollywood made this production choice because of Italy's utter "filmability" as a country able to boast superb art and splendid nature and was inhabited by capable artisans and "natural actors," people who "made the world a stage," as often remarked in American promotional materials and interviews. The advertising for these pictures always emphasized the historical importance of the locations (even when the picture was set in modern times) and careful research into costumes and sets using pictorial sources, in homage to Italian art history and cinema. American producers' and distributors' keen interest in Italian cinema was as evident in the early 1900s as it is underestimated today. In the 1910s, producer and distributor George Kleine not only made his fortune launching Italian historical epics on the American market, but he also influenced their production in Italy through a system of quality controls that demanded a guaranteed number of extras and a spectacular mise en scène. In 1912, he struck a deal with Baron Fassini and invested in the production of *Quo Vadis?*[17] It was but a short step to move from distributing and coproducing Italian films in the United States to making American films in Italy.

However, given the turbulent Italian sociopolitical situation after the war and WASP cultural prejudice against southern Europeans, the American film crews' journey to Italy was not always a relaxed immersion in culture and art, and sometimes even ended in disaster. An unsettling, ambiguous tension lurked in the background, as exemplified by the incidents described in *Tender Is the Night* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Disoriented and perennially drunk, the Americans of the Lost Generation, from Ernest Hemingway to Fitzgerald, wandered around a Europe rendered unrecognizable by World War I. They were the heirs of Henry James and Mark Twain, inclined to emphasize the decadence and the "strangeness" of Italian culture rather than its greatness, even though they never questioned its fascination. While *A Farewell to Arms* offered an empathetic presentation of the Italian characters, Fitzgerald set the beginning of the psychological (and moral) destruction of Dick, the protagonist of *Tender Is the Night*, in Rome, where the character had followed Rosemary, and actually documented the writer's own dramatic experiences, including jail.[18]

Regardless of the turbulence of the day, a number of American film personalities visited Italy on a tour, which usually took them to London and Paris and the almost obligatory ports of call of Venice, Florence, Rome, and Naples. Mary Pickford, with Douglas Fairbanks, and Frances Marion with her husband, Fred Thomson, traveled through Italy together in May 1920. The impressions left by this trip were so powerful that the only film that screenwriter Marion ever directed was an Italian war story in which Mary Pickford played the part of Angela, an Italian girl offering support to a lost Austrian soldier in *The Love Light* (1921). This film was not shot in Italy yet is interestingly "Italian" in its use of the filmic landscape.[19] In the early twenties, screenwriter Ouida Bergère with her husband, director George Fitzmaurice, spent three or four months in Europe, "in a search for material,"[20] which they must have found, as they made at least two films in Italy. Anita Loos and her husband, John Emerson, visited Italy in 1927 and even met with Mussolini, whom the screenwriter found *simpatico*. When she autographed her avant-garde novel *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* for him, she wrote: "To Benito Mussolini who has given our age its own flame of grandeur." In a contemporary interview, she stated that he was "the most forceful, the most earnest and the most heroic personality I have ever met."[21] Later on, of course, she changed her mind.

By 1910, transatlantic travel had become faster and more comfortable. American filmmakers, curious about what people were doing on the Old Continent, visited Europe to learn about the experiments of French impressionist cinema and German expressionist films, as well as about Nordic social sagas or Italian "toga films" and languid dramas. Most of these American film tourists traveled to an Italy they were acquainted with only from books, museums, and the stage. They were neither culturally nor politically prepared to understand the country as it was after the war, when uneven industrialization, rural poverty, and class tensions led to violent social unrest. The complexities of Italian politics—from Mussolini's initial militancy in the Socialist party to the internal fragmentation of the Left, and the birth of the two main mass parties, the Communist Party and the Popular (Catholic) Party in the early 1920s—were almost unmanageable concepts within a two-party (Anglo-Saxon) political culture. The tensions between a glorious past and a disquieting present occasionally emerged not only in American novels, but also in the image of Italy proposed by these films, or in (American) interviews on these experiences, which clearly reveal the contradiction between love for Italy and contempt for Italians, a constant throughout American cultural history. The turbulent historical period in which these films were shot should have discouraged any rational entrepreneur of the (emerging) American film industry from investing in such projects. The economic incentives (cheap skilled labor, laid off because of the crisis in the European film industry) seem poor compensation for the difficulties most of the people involved recall from their experiences. The attractions offered by Europe and its cinema and the desire to steal the secrets of its success were the main reason for these journeys. Mysteriously, neither Italian nor American film histories report that American studios made at least twelve movies in Italy in the 1920s. The Italians ignored this situation when it was happening, and the Americans erased the experience afterwards. This neglect has encouraged a process where the spectacular qualities and superiority of Italian cinema in the pre–World War I years, recognized at the time by the filmmakers who went to Italy to learn about it, have almost been forgotten, overwhelmed by the all-conquering Hollywood historiography.

Edwin S. Porter and The Eternal City

In 1914, just a few months before Italy entered World War I, the pioneer of American cinema, Edwin S. Porter, shot a film adaptation of Hall Caine's bestseller *The Eternal City*, in Rome—supposedly with the cooperation of the Italian government and the Vatican. The lack of reliable historical accounts, or of Italian records of this event is particularly intriguing.

The melodramatic plot of *The Eternal City* is a prototype of Roman narratives, but it seems an unlikely storyline with its widowed pope and his socialist son, for what was the first American film production in Italy, particularly as anti-Catholicism was gaining ground in a phase of "loss of confidence" (in progressivism) in the United States.[22] The (confused) feuilleton recalls Anglo-Saxon gothic-historical novels such as Ann Radcliff's *The Italian*, in which "it is Italy, the Mediterranean South with its overtones of papistry and lust, that is the true ghost, never quite exorcised by the fables of the more genteel gothicists."[23] Moreover, deep-seated WASP prejudice toward papists, Machiavellianism, and decadent Rome is accompanied here by a Christian Socialist variation, in pacifist mode—not the most apt of themes in 1914, when Italy was being politically torn apart by the decision to enter the war and uncertainty about whose side to take.

The Eternal City was shot in Rome in the first months of 1914, a Jubilee year, in order to catch the massive Vatican processions on film. It made ample use of monuments such as the Colosseum, St. Peter's Square and the Basilica, the Pope's Vatican gardens, Castel Sant'Angelo, and the Villa d'Este gardens.

Although the film is not mentioned at length in film histories, at the time of its production and distribution (one year before Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*) this spectacular picture received wide coverage in the American press, offering a lively account of the events and some interesting insights into this exceptional cinematographic feat. Some sources state that the Italian authorities had specifically granted the use of these locations. In particular, the *Motion Picture News* (July 25, 1914) wrote: "It is the first time that the authorities of Rome gave permission for the ancient city to be put upon the screen and the importance of the achievement, both from a commercial and as well as from an artistic and historical standpoint, cannot be overestimated."[24] A large-format promotional material, preserved at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) library proposes a vast selection of published articles on the making of the film and reviews which appeared in 1915, after the premiere. It includes a long interview with Porter, titled "Dodging Government Red Tape in 'The Eternal City'" which had appeared in the *Morning Telegraph*.[25] As the Italian authorities had banned the publication and distribution of Caine's novel in the country for political and religious reasons, in order to secure permission to shoot the film, Famous Players "told them it was a simple little picture play which needed plenty of Italian local color." When the Italian institutions asked for more specific documents, Hugh Ford faked a harmless script, avoiding any reference to the forbidden source. Throughout the actual shooting, the American crew took advantage of every opportunity to film monuments or restricted locations, stretching permits and tricking custodians.[26] In their mendacity and dishonesty, they mirrored the negative Italian stereotype.

Although the Famous Players filmmakers never informed the Roman authorities or the Vatican about the true subject of the film, an item in the *New York Herald* states that the plan to shoot inside monuments such as the Colosseum or the Vatican "proved to be a matter of constant difficulty, in which the services of the American consul, the American Ambassador and other various strong influences were used."[27] Hence the American film industry, when working abroad, had the support of the US government in an institutional alliance, which is indicative of the special role played by Hollywood in the American "imperial project" from a very early stage. Yet in the case of *The Eternal City*, even American diplomacy was unable to smooth the process. According to *New York Herald*, the solution that finally enabled the film to be shot came from Naples:

> "In Rome," [Porter] continued, "we tried to use our Yankee ingenuity, but it was of no avail. Consequently, we had to find other means. Some of our most practical problems were worked out for us by a young Italian interpreter in our employ. . . . We secured a valuable addition to our entourage in the shape of a guide who hailed from Naples. Now, for sheer, thorough, light-hearted rascality and proven lying ability, Dame Nature did her best and completest work when she doped [*sic*] out the Italian tourist guide genus. And this chap I sent for to Naples was the king bee of his tribe."

This derogatory appreciation of the young interpreter's, paired with another example of belligerent bragging speak for themselves: "Also it is the first time on record that a foreign government bowed complacently to the will of American promoters to the extent of furnishing those enterprising gentlemen with the services of a large body of militia to use as they deemed best." After tiring negotiations, cheap tricks, and having to deal with prejudiced attitudes on both sides, Porter and Ford did obtain support in the form of huge crowds of extras ("thousands of the soldiery as well as hundreds [of] railway officials [and] government officials"). Happy with the "cheapness as well as the intelligence of the supernumeraries," Porter noted, "The Italian extra people seemed to have far more appreciation of what the picture and the scene meant and what they were supposed to be expressing, . . . while their pay is so low that it is possible to use far greater numbers in making spectacular scenes than could be employed without bankrupting an American producer."[28] This early and authoritative appraisal of Italian "supernumeraries" is a recurring element in interviews and memoirs of the making of these pictures; it might also suggest an unstated comparison between the orderly crowds of the cinema and the rioting mobs in the streets, as if, under the control of Hollywood filmmakers, Italians would transform their unruly nature while maintaining their "natural" ability to understand "what they were supposed to be expressing" on a film set. Quite different was protagonist Pauline Frederick's recollection of the shooting on her film debut that evoked images of a country and people prey to strong social tensions.[29] Under the title "Useful Riots," the *Morning Telegraph* quoted Porter:

> The day after we reached Rome the big strike took place. It was supposed to be engineered by street railway employees, hack drivers, etc., but in reality it was nothing more or less than a sort of young revolution. It was the socialists that were behind it all, and they simply used the grievances of some of the working people to get started. But the government promptly nipped that amateur revolution short. All the stores in Rome were closed for a week; the troops were ordered out and had all the fun they wanted breaking up crowds in the streets with unexpected charges. . . . Now, oddly enough, this state of affairs fitted in nicely with our plans. You remember that in the story of the "Eternal City" the socialists raise merry ructions and the soldiers have to charge the rioters, labor conflicts, and all that sort of thing. Well, here we had the real material right to our hands, and you can bet we took advantage of it. We got some dandy pictures of the troops charging, and other lively street scenes, better than if they had been made to order, so to speak. This is one play that pictures actual events not faked for the occasion, thanks to our friends the Italian socialists.[30]

In addition to offering a peculiar interpretation of the strike as a "young revolution," the cynical account of the shooting of the mob scenes offers a hint as to the controversial material included in the film, which may explain any qualms or embarrassment about showing it in Italy, or even in the United States, after the outbreak of war.

The same article indicates that, given the difficulties they were continually faced with, the American filmmakers had tried to secure the cooperation of a "big Italian motion picture company."

> This particular organization is owned by the Bank of Rome . . . and it pulls a strong oar in the political stream, local and otherwise. Now, we had every reason to think that these folks would be willing to assist us in any way they could; so it was to them we turned at first when we wanted a studio. . . . But we were "strangers in a strange land" all right. I had heard a good deal about the smoothness of Italian diplomacy, but this was the first time I came into personal collision with it.

The film company "owned by the Bank of Rome" was Cines, the most important Italian studio of the time, which, according to Italian censorship and financing conventions, would have requested to view the film script; and Cines would not have agreed to be part of a pacifist film and such a controversial project in 1914. Furthermore, Italian cinema was still at its peak, and wisely avoided helping probable future competition. There appears to be no need to think in terms of diplomatic machinations or Machiavellian or papist conspiracies but simply political and commercial common sense.

The account of the making of *The Eternal City* proposed in the promotional materials narrates the events according to the cultural stereotypes applied by the American filmmakers, presenting themselves as heroes who had fought the Italian authorities and Italian film companies against all odds, bragging about the underhand tricks they had used in order to film in Rome. They even accused Italian film producers of suggesting that the extras demand higher wages from the foreigners: "They were jealous of us . . . they did not fancy Americans coming to their burg and doing such a big stunt, on a scale they had never attempted." While the American filmmakers ought to have expected a defensive attitude from the Italian film company, it seems quite contradictory that Cines would suggest this raise, as they would subsequently have had to raise wages too. Only one review implicitly recognized the competitive intent behind the production: "*The Eternal City* . . . proves that American actors and directors can rival the Italians on their own ground."[31]

At the onset of the war, the company was ordered to leave, so most of the interior scenes were shot in the studio in New York. Although it was a sensible choice to narrate a Christian Socialist story far away from Rome, the solution of shooting on location for exteriors and working with the actors on dramatic scenes in a studio back in the United States seems to have been regular practice with most of these films.

But Zukor's problems with this project were not over yet, as he confessed in his autobiography:

> The budget of *The Eternal City* was $100,000, by far the costliest we had attempted, and through an oversight we faced one of our recurrent crisis (*sic*). One long sequence showed the hero pleading with the Pope during a walk in the Vatican gardens. Unfortunately, he clutched the arm of the actor portraying the Pope. Only after the company's return did we learn that no one is allowed to touch the Pope in such a manner. It was therefore possible that Catholics might take offense. The matter was further complicated by the fact that Hall Caine . . . had been an adversary of the Catholic Church. We cut as much as we could, yet some of the unfortunate scenes had to stay unless we were to postpone everything and send the company back to Rome. And extensive distribution plans had already been made. I called on Bishop Patrick Joseph Hayes and explained to him our mistake was an innocent one and we were sorry for it. . . . A ban by the Catholic Church on *The Eternal City* might put us out of business. Bishop Hayes was sympathetic.[32]

Obviously, having a character touch the Pope's arm was the least of Zukor's problems. It is almost unbelievable that such an exceptional investment was made without noticing the offensive nature of the narrative—an "oversight" indicative of both the crude sociocultural attitudes of the early American film industry and a blatant disregard for Catholic audiences.[33] Zukor's main worry concerned "the extensive distribution plans." In fact, its cost and exceptional length (eight reels), the presence of Porter, the location shooting, and its literary source made *The Eternal City* a very prestigious film. Famous Players organized a formidable promotional launch and a première at the Lyceum Theatre in New York, on December 27, 1915, where, according to *Motion Picture News* (January 9, 1915), "Mr. Rothafel of the Strand Theatre arranged the music and conducted the orchestra. The results he attained with his music, and also with a number of men to imitate the mobs, were most satisfactory." This mix of live "performance" and music was not uncommon at that time, especially in the presentation of big productions. It appears that the musical accompaniment included the Garibaldi Hymn, perhaps referring to the character of Roselli, a follower of exiled Christian Socialist Giuseppe Mazzini.[34] This Anthem, in Italy, is associated with leftist nationalism, yet another example of (ideological) confusion in this Socialist, pacifist, and Christian work.

After its pharaonic premiere, Famous Players devised a special distribution plan through the Select Film Booking Agency.[35] Daniel Frohman, a prominent theater figure who made frequent incursions into cinema, was the managing director of Select, and Edwin Porter its technical director. This innovative distribution agency, devised in order to best exploit prestigious films, however, was a short-lived experiment. Since Porter decided to move into other fields, *The Eternal City* ended up being his last film; yet another reason to wonder why it has not attracted more historiographical interest.[36]

The promotional campaign for the film, documented in a rich array of materials, even ventured to send out an educational message: "Civilization and a better race of men and women who will take our places after we are gone. That is the object of *The Eternal City*, that is why it is eternal, because it had this idea long ago, and that is what the film shows foremost."[37] But the pacifist message of the film clashed dramatically with the outbreak of war. Another article from the campaign went so far as to evoke the image of a Christian Socialist Italy: "Just at present Italy occupies a prominent place in the international searchlight, and it is worthy of note that Caine's prophecy of Italian political conditions as evidenced in his masterpiece hits with singular accuracy the situation in Rome to-day [*sic*]." The review suggested that the character of Roselli had been inspired by Mazzinian exiled artist Dante Gabriele Rossetti, and compared the protagonist David to Giolotti [*sic*] (i.e., Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti), defining him as a Socialist, and "a tribune of the people . . . a noble prototype of the hero of 'The Eternal City.'" Giolitti was indeed a (pragmatic) reformist, but he was also the prime minister during the colonial war to conquer Libya, and the very opposite of the young idealist revolutionary in the novel.[38] Italian politics at the time—with the heated debate within the Left as to whether to go to war—coupled with violent social conflict, opened the way to Fascism rather than to a Socialist revolution. A comment like this, however, points to the highly politically controversial elements within the picture and the poor cultural awareness of the American filmmakers.

The reviews of *The Eternal City* were full of superlatives and insisted on the exceptional opportunity the American crew had had to film in spaces never filmed in before (by Americans) and to record the spectacular mob scenes and the beautiful landscapes.

> Rome! The Eternal City—the inspiration of historians—the dream of poets—the Mecca of artists—and now the mise en scène of motion picture screen. How beautifully the idea is caught by Edwin S. Porter! From the first Belasco-like effect, showing the moon rising over the dome of St. Peter's with the dancing reflection in the Tiber, and throwing dark shadows across the Appian Way; to the calm mysterious picture opening Part II, showing the majestic ruin of the Coliseum darkening with the setting of the sun.[39]

Another article noted, "It is difficult to single out any isolated scene as most striking, so continuous is the pageant of beauty which the Roman backgrounds afford. There is a wonderful distant panorama of Rome, with the great dome of St. Peter's swelling like a pointed bubble, through the evening mists. This drew a round [of applause] from Wednesday's audience on its own account."[40] This comment about the applause confirms the seductive power Italian landscapes still had over American audiences in 1915. A full-page advertisement in *Variety* (January 30, 1915) announced the release of "Stupendous Photo-Spectacle Triumph 'The Eternal City' by Hall Caine with Pauline Frederick," with a (disquieting) comment: "Added to its general and unusual value is the vital timeliness derived from the recent disastrous earthquakes in Italy, which injured many of the historic and ancient buildings that form the background of the screen production." Given that the dramatic event of the Marsica earthquake of 1914 led to 35,000 deaths, its commercial exploitation here as a reason to see a film, which (unintentionally) preserved images of lost monuments, is quite disturbing and indicates a human distance from the Italian population that was in itself a symptom of WASP cultural attitudes to southern Europeans.

Notwithstanding the high production costs and the cast, the film was not distributed in Italy. The lack of any circulation in Italy is an element common to several of these titles, as if Italians rejected the casual attitudes of foreigners, demonstrating a cultural resistance that verged on anti-Americanism.[41] In this instance, however, the explanation is much simpler, given the controversial nature of the narrative and its pacifist message when war broke out.

Whatever really happened, there is absolutely no trace in Italian film historiography of Edwin Porter making a film of Roman monuments, extraordinary event that it was. On the American side, a lot of questions remain unanswered: why go to all the effort of making such an enormous production from such a controversial source? Why shoot the film in Italy in a period of such dramatic social unrest? By 1918, when a shorter version of the film was distributed in the United States, it evoked an image of Rome and Italian politics that no longer made sense, and above all, its pacifist message was in strident contrast with the new direction of American foreign policy. Porter's *The Eternal City* thus disappeared from the screens and from film history.

Herbert Brenon in Italy

The next Hollywood filmmaker to reach Italy was the Irish-born Herbert Brenon.[42] A key director in the middle phase of silent cinema, he came from a stage background and had already used an Italian setting in *Sin* (1915), in which Theda Bara played Rosa, a southern Italian immigrant in New York, in a dark story of love and death, religion, superstition, and *camorra*—the Neapolitan mafia.

After briefly working in the United Kingdom, Brenon met Sandro Salvini, the grandson of Tommaso Salvini[43] and cast him in *12.10* (1919), together with Marie Doro.[44] Apparently it was Salvini who introduced Brenon to Giuseppe Barattolo, from the conglomerate of Italian studios known as the UCI, set up to combat the crisis in the national industry in an effort to "renew Italian cinema on an international basis."[45] In contrast with Cines's uncooperative attitude, encountered by Porter in 1914, the declining Italian film industry offered Brenon a stimulating challenge. Perhaps during that period (1918–1922), there was still some illusory faith in the recovery of national cinema, and Italian producers, naïve like the Trojans from whom they were supposed to be descended, brought the wooden horse within their walls by inviting or allowing Americans to make films in Italy. Indeed, the relationship between American and European cinema in the 1920s is both conflictual and strategically astute on the part of the Americans.[46]

Herbert Brenon, still in search of a decisive professional success, accepted the UCI's proposition, arguing in an interview that Italians wanted "swiftly moving film stories and that they were turning their backs on the actors who pose and strut."[47] This comment demonstrates that he had rightly perceived the weak spots in Italian silent cinema: its frail dramatic structure and a somewhat excessive acting style among the divas. However, in the same interview he noted, "the French and the Italian studios excelled those of the United States in printing, developing, and similar crafts, while Italians themselves, with their dark eyes, fine teeth, and natural talent, were ideally suited for film acting." Given that the memory of the technical superiority of Italian and French cinema in the early 1900s was almost lost until Abel's *Red Rooster Scare*, this comment might seem surprising nowadays, whereas the comment on Italians as "natural actors" is recurrent.

Brenon arrived in Italy in the summer 1919. The first of his Italian films was *La principessa misteriosa*,[48] a confused comedy-drama that takes place in Venice (which at the time was by far the favorite Italian stopover of American filmmakers). Indeed, Venice heads the list of Italian cities figuring as settings for American films. According to the *AFI Catalog*, in the 1920s twelve films were set (not shot) in Venice, five in Rome, one in Florence, and five in Naples. In the 1930s, fourteen titles were set in Venice, three in Rome, one in Florence, and seven in Naples. This unexpected distribution of American filmic geography in Italy has to do with a long tradition of Anglo-Saxon fascination with Venetian landscapes, with Canaletto or Longhi's paintings, and with Venice's cultural position: set between West and East, it was the last stop of the Orient Express in Europe.[49] Characters in the films mostly arrived in Venice from Paris, or from imaginary kingdoms, fleeing from dynastic quarrels or sentimental dramas in search of adventure and a romantic dream.

The protagonists of *La principessa misteriosa* were Marie Doro and the Italian actor Alberto Capozzi in the role of the writer; the rest of the crew and cast were (obviously enough, being an Italian production) Italian, as in Brenon's other two "Italian" pictures. The film however, was a fiasco with Italian critics and was attacked in a spirit of virulent nationalism. The Turin paper *La vita cinematografica* wrote:

> Is this the glowing American star who came to us to bring her light? Is this the superlative knowledge of the great transatlantic director? It was not necessary to trouble such great personalities from the distant land of *catwalk* and *foxtrot* to put together such a film, especially if the work cost an exorbitant sum, as some have stated. Any of our least capable directors, any of our second-class actresses, would have served the purpose, and perhaps with better results. What advantages has collaboration with these foreigners brought our cinema? . . . Both Brenon and Doro have a lot to learn from us, or at least nothing to teach us.[50]

The hostility, motivated by the disapproval of the UCI's strategy of hiring these two international figures, was rooted in an unshaken pride in the national film industry, but it also contained a clear streak of antimodernism and anti-Americanism, implied by the references to the catwalk and foxtrot. World War I had fomented Italian nationalism, and the sentiment was staunchly embraced by film producers, intellectuals, and the middle class. Exacerbated by the peace treaties, whose terms were perceived as unfavorable to Italy, nationalism would soon develop into Fascism.

On the contrary, English critics appreciated the visual beauty of the film:

> Exteriors of extraordinary loveliness are the striking feature of this fantastic melodrama, written and produced by Herbert Brenon and set among such beauty spots as Venice and Capri. . . . The highest praise is due to the photographer who has succeeded in capturing many of Italy's most impressive scenes in their loveliest moods. The panoramic coastline in its towering majesty, with its shadowy mountains looming above the ragged cliffs; scenes performed in silhouette at the mouth of a cavern with the rippling waters of the Mediterranean forming a shimmering background. Brilliant studies of the flashing lagoons and dark-hued canals of Venice: all these are screen pictures of eye-enchanting beauty.[51]

The saving graces of the film were therefore the beauty of Italian nature and the professional ability of the Italian cinematographer, Giuseppe Filippa. His achievements praised here confirm the high technical and professional standards of Italian cinematography in those years. (References to good cinematography and gorgeous set design abound in many foreign reviews of Italian films of the period.)

The divergence between the positive reactions of the Anglo-Saxon press and the negative Italian responses remained a constant in Brenon's Italian experiences, as documented in Jack Lodge's and Riccardo Redi's essays in the special issue of *Griffithiana* devoted to him. *La principessa misteriosa* was such a critical and commercial failure that "none of Brenon's Italian films was released until he was safely back in America, and he would not have seen the reviews."[52]

Il colchico e la rosa and *Beatrice* were both shot in Sicily. Marie Doro and Sandro Salvini were the protagonists in both pictures. Set in Sicily, *Il colchico e la rosa* (also known as *Sorella contro sorella*) was a story of abandoned twin sisters, one adopted by a nobleman and the other reared by beggars and thieves. The plot recalls American films on Italian immigrants, with orphan girls running into different criminal and sexual hazards or audacious kidnappings. Again, the Italian critics attacked it with no holds barred: "As there is no rose without a thorn, there is no chance of rescue from such idiotic and tasteless spectacles as that offered by Brenon's films. Let us treat his work as a cinematic abortion and pass on."[53] Released in the United Kingdom as *Little Sister* and in the United States as *Sisters* (but through the limited distribution of US rights), it was appreciated by critics, again mostly for the beauty of the Sicilian landscape and Filippa's cinematography.[54]

Brenon's *Beatrice* was shot almost entirely in Taormina, which reveals the confusion within the efforts at internationalization of the film industry at the time, since the narrative was set in California, thus losing its main asset, the "exotic" landscape of Sicily. "Scripted by Brenon from a novel by Rider Haggard, the film was a simple story triangle set, for film purposes at any rate, in a village on the West coast in America."[55] This film also was attacked by Italian film critics while it was appreciated by the Anglo-Saxon press for its mise en scène and use of landscapes. The décor was the work of Italian Alfredo Manzi, a set designer at Barattolo's Caesar studio. Some British reviewers praised another traditional quality of Italian cinema: acting by children. In this case the youngster was "Mimì, a child of extreme beauty and wonderful natural method."[56]

Brenon's Italian pictures resemble the decadent aristocratic melodramas being made in Italy for the divas at that time—although this was probably the UCI's production strategy, not the director's choice. The UCI and Brenon's poor choice of narrative material for these quick productions (ten months in all, according to Lodge) emphasizes the blurred interpretation of what "internationalizing" film production would mean in the early 1920s: the films come across as neither American enough nor Italian enough.

In keeping with the dramatic plots of Brenon's Italian films, just before his expected departure from Sicily, he mysteriously disappeared on the slopes of the Mount Etna, as reported by the *New York Times* of January 11, 1920: "Brenon Reported Missing in Sicily. Movie Producer Is Said to Have Disappeared While Making Scenes on Mount Etna. Search Party Organized." The article stated that he "is reported to have disappeared four days ago while taking scenes with an Italian company," and that "great anxiety is felt for him on account of the snow on the precipitous cliffs and because of the revival of brigandage since the war."[57] A subsequent article reported that he had indeed been kidnapped: "A postcard from Herbert Brenon from Taormina . . . is an additional proof that he has escaped injury from the bandits who held him up and relieved him of some of his jewelry and belongings."[58] The sudden appearance of these Sicilian bandits is such a *coup de théâtre* that one becomes suspicious, especially as the episode received no further publicity; even Lodge does not mention it in Brenon's biography. But the *New York Times* was such an authoritative source that one cannot doubt its veracity. Whatever the truth of the matter, none of the later American productions in Italy were shot in Sicily.

After ten months in Venice, Rome, Capri, and Taormina, Brenon returned to Hollywood in October 1920 and subsequently entered the more successful part of his career, with *The Rustle of Silk* (1923), *Spanish Dancer* (1923*)*, *Peter Pan* (1924) and *Beau Geste* (1926). It is hard to assess the effects of the Italian experience on him. One could claim that the attention to the figurative, the special care for the mise en scène, and the ability in directing actors that Brenon revealed in the mature part of his career could have been at least in part influenced by his Italian collaboration with actor Sandro Salvini, cinematographer Filippa, and set designer Manzi. But a more significant cultural interaction was his plan, upon his return to the United States: to turn the popular play "The Jest" into a movie.

> The latter announcement will be of untold interest to the New York public and, in fact, to the American public, for this play, with John and Lionel Barrymore in the cast, has almost a country-wide popularity. Outsiders coming to New York have felt it one of their first duties to visit the Plymouth theatre and see the Barrymores in what is conceived by everyone to be their masterpiece. "The Jest" is by Sem Benelli, an Italian writer, and it was translated into English for the Barrymores. . . . The motion picture rights were probably purchased by Mr. Brenon directly from Benelli, who lives in Italy, although the former says nothing of the transaction.[59]

While nothing came of this ambitious project, nowadays it might be surprising to learn that the most popular play put on by the Barrymores was a translation of one of the most famous Italian theatrical works of the 1900s, *La cena delle beffe*, offering further confirmation to the argument in chapter 2: the appreciation of US audiences (and performers) of Italian stage repertoires.

The three films Brenon made in Italy for the UCI remain an isolated instance: all the other "American films" shot in Italy in the 1920s originated with American producers. It is however difficult to evaluate this experience. The intentions of the Italian producers were quite confused. Perhaps they did not intend to utilize an "American" filmmaker in order to experiment with a different type of product and working methods, or to challenge a cinema that the shrewdest among them already knew would dominate the market. They just wanted the name of an American director to try and sell the films as American, where it would appear more convenient than distributing them as Italian pictures—a plan that would explain the decision to transform the Sicilian locations into a Californian setting in *Beatrice*. It was almost as if the UCI wanted to vindicate the move of the American distributors who, only a few years earlier, had tried to present the Italian historical spectacles as American products. The business was still young, and its methods rough. And yet the parallel with the "American" credits of early "spaghetti westerns," with Sergio Leone calling himself Bob Robertson, is more than appropriate here.

The Italian reaction to this early experiment in the "Americanization" of a national cinema or, more precisely, the response to this early transatlantic exchange, must be broken down into its different components: audience, industry, and critics. The Italian post–World War I audiences had already shown their appreciation for American cinema; the industry was divided, but an important backroom faction was already dealing with the competitor, while the film critics were wholly negative. But the historical account of these events was written on the basis of film criticism, with a negative attitude toward Brenon's work and, above all, the UCI's clumsy but not unreasonable project. A creeping anti-Americanism permeated Italian film criticism, deeply immersed in nationalist values, that separated intellectuals from the audience and from some producers. Therefore, the combination of an American director with Italian cinema and Italian landscapes did not automatically produce the sum of the factors.

The Mysterious Case of Sant'Ilario

Sant'Ilario (1923) has left scant traces of its existence, but it represents a unique experiment in production worthy of investigation. Set in the 1860s, the film was an adaptation of Francis Marion Crawford's successful historical saga of the Roman aristocratic Saracinesca family (as was *The White Sister*, filmed in Italy in the same year by Inspiration Picture).[60] A costume film (even if not set in the distant past), *Sant'Ilario* was directed by Henry Kolker, a German-born stage and film actor, who directed a few American silent pictures. The actors were Italian Sandro Salvini, Ida Carloni Talli (who also starred in the cast of *The White Sister*), and Edy Darclea, who also worked for the historical films

Gordon Edwards shot in Rome in the same year and later in German cinema.[61] Cinematographer Charles Rosher, who "had followed Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks in their European honeymoon" stayed in Italy to shoot this film, with the assistance of the Italian cinematographer Fernando Risi,[62] who also worked on Henry King's *The White Sister*. What is more, the same studio, where the film was shot, had been rented by Fox for the making of *Nero*. The professional interactions within this filmography indicate that there was a notable degree of collaboration among the American companies making films in Italy and between Italian and American companies after 1922, when the crisis of the Italian film industry had matured.

Kevin Brownlow cited *Sant'Ilario* as an American film produced in Italy (although the *AFI Catalog* for the 1920s does not mention any *Sant'Ilario*); Vittorio Martinelli, however, included it as an Italian production by Ultra in the 1923 filmography of Italian silent films. The confusion is solved in a one-page note pasted in a scrapbook preserved by Rosher: *Sant'Ilario* was coproduced by Canadian independent entrepreneur Ernest Shipman (husband of the film pioneer Nell Shipman). In an undated "Open Letter of Appreciation," Shipman wrote: "Through the kind offices of the United States Consulate at Rome, I desire to extend the most sincere thanks to those in Italy who so ably contributed to the making of the first Italo-American screen production of the film industry."[63] While documenting the continuous protection the American film business received from US diplomats in Italy—always downplayed by the studios' historiography and extolling the generosity of Italian institutions ("especially the civil and ecclesiastic authorities of Rome for unsurpassed co-operation")—this letter also spotlights a small Italian film company, mentioning "Francesco Stame of 'Ultra,' his associates and the excellent artists in his organization." Stame was not a film producer, but the lawyer at the signing of the formal act setting up the UCI in 1919.[64] However, the UCI was just emerging from the negative reaction to Brenon's "Italian" films, so it seems unlikely that it would try this experiment again with a minor director such as Kolker, even if only as a coproduction. Most probably, it was Stame's personal decision to collaborate with Shipman, in accord with film distributor Mario Luporini, who is thanked by the Canadian producer in the same letter.

If this coproduction aimed to increase the presence of Italian cinema on the American market, the result was disappointing since there is no evidence that the film was ever distributed in the United States. *Sant'Ilario* was, however, distributed in Italy and received positive reviews, praised in particular for the actors, the mise en scène, and Rosher's cinematography. Evidently these first attempts at internationalizing film production, either as an American initiative or as an Italian project, did not work as efficiently as hoped, and the films did not circulate on both sides of the Atlantic.

To understand the networking that produced the first "Italo-American" picture, it might be helpful to reconsider a 1922 article by the American cinematographer Charles Rosher. He documents the exchange of knowledge involved in these activities at the professional and industrial levels. Like Shipman, he praised Dr. Stame, "a creative genius and a tireless worker who watched every development of the art with the view of applying it to the productions made in Italy."[65] This statement suggests that in his perception, Stame employed American filmmakers in order to update Italian production methods by learning from the competitor's technicians. The cinematographer also appreciated Mario Luporini, "a distribution genius, who is the connecting link between many of the important producers, including Americans, and the theatres in his land. He is vigorously advocating the sumptuous and modern-to-the-minute playhouse and is emphasizing the need of benefiting music to accompany presentations." This comment points to the different situation regarding venues for projection in Italy, where movie theaters had developed earlier: Americans started constructing movie palaces in the 1920s. The article also confirms the important role played by Luporini in the Italian distribution of American films and as a key figure in the transatlantic exchange. In 1922, Luporini became the exclusive distributor of United Artists' pictures in Italy, founding Artisti Associati.[66] As Rosher worked with Pickford and Fairbanks, who were among the founders of United Artists, it seems more than mere coincidence that Luporini set up this enterprise in the same year that he came indirectly into contact with these "important producers" through the *Sant'Ilario* experience. These American experiences in Italy, spreading their influence like rings in water, might have had an impact not only individual careers, but on Italian cinema in general, helping Hollywood in its conquest of the Italian market.

In his penetrating analysis of the Italian film industry, Rosher offered American professionals an accurate transcultural description of the state of Italian cinema in the early 1920s, as if he were a travel reporter exploring unmapped territories. "The motion picture industry, like others in Italy, is suffering from the recent war," he noted. "Ten years ago those interested in the cinema looked to Italy for new ideas in the art. Now Italy is not leading but following." Thus, the American cinematographer was quite conscious of the changing balance taking place in those years in the film market. He commented critically on how "far behind" Italian cinema was in terms of equipment, studios, and lighting, noting how even the new Bernini studios of Dr. Stame did not have an electric system which would allow him to use "sunlight arcs" because they still used "daylight illumination." Rosher based his comments on Ultra, probably an improvised company, whose name does not appear in any history of Italian silent cinema, so his assessment is of little value on the whole. At the same time, the cinematographer recognized that he had "met first class technical artists in Italy, like Fernando Risi, who was associated as a cinematographer in the filming of 'Sant'Ilario.'" It would seem then that despite falling behind from the technical point of view, Italian cinema could still count on good professionals.

In terms of film content, Rosher lamented the lack of empathy in Italian movies ("The Italians seem unable to inject human interest in their creations, so necessary to successfully entertain the American audience"). As in Brenon's statement, Americans perceived the limitation of Italian films from the dramaturgical point of view. Rosher also specifically complained about the lack of organization, identified with the characteristics of the Italian film producer: "Most of their organizations are one-man affairs, and that one man is usually a prominent or titled citizen." The cinematographer attributed the lack of initiative among Italian professionals on the set to this rigid leadership by the (aristocratic) producers and directors, observing, "The Italian industry has not yet arrived at that stage of development where the production of a motion picture is regarded as the result of the efforts of a corps of experts rather than of a single individual who has assembled about him an unorganized group of assistants whose chief duties [*sic*] it is to take orders." (In fact, Italian cinema has never been an "industry" and its mode of production has remained very different from the Studio System.[67]) Rosher offered an interesting explanation: "The real root of the absence of initiative probably is in the Italian social system which, with its graduated and undemocratic 'classes,' is like the majority of other European countries." An interesting remark, pointing to the social immobility of Italy just a few months before the Fascist March on Rome.

In line with previous considerations, the cinematographer appraised Italian actors: "The acting profession is on a very high plane in the Latin nation. An able American director would find very responsive material there, but while it is the ambition of some of the players to come someday to this country, a great many of them, like some of the most distinguished Italian opera singers, prefer to concentrate their abilities in their native lands, strange as this seems with the art in its present condition there." Rosher did not try to explain the scarce interest shown by Italian actors in moving to Hollywood—but his observation is perfectly in line with the findings in chapter 2: "going to Hollywood" was not (yet) a dream or an aspiration: Salvini worked in the United Kingdom, and Darclea in Germany, but never in Hollywood. This lack of interest was shared by Italian film workers who did not seem affected by these experiences, as if uninterested in learning from their Hollywood peers. Obviously, they did learn, but it did not radically change the production methods on the sets.

On the Italian front, the institutions involved in the making of *Sant'Ilario* had conflicting attitudes. While Italian "civil and ecclesiastic" authorities assisted these film productions when their own film industry was falling apart and needed support, Italian film critics and intellectuals were critical of any collaboration with Hollywood, and the Italian film industry was totally divided. Hugely indebted to the banks, it began to look west, but in search of quick business rather than structural models.

The Historical Spectacles

Brenon's work at the Italian UCI and Shipman's *Sant'Ilario* were isolated episodes; the other films made by Americans in Italy in the 1920s were all produced by American studios. Fox shot *Nero* (1922) and *The Shepherd King* (1923) in Rome, and both were directed by Gordon Edwards in the most obvious genre for a Roman production: the historical spectacle. In this phase of the history of American silent cinema, historical epics not only satisfied the need for cultural legitimacy, but they also met the Victorian taste for popularization, educational entertainment and archeology. As well as consuming Italian "toga dramas," this taste was also fed by American theater with the staging of lavish costume productions in a mix of circus, religious drama, and exotic ballet—Cecil B. DeMille did not invent the genre.

The two Fox productions were actually shot together and had almost identical casts, including handsome young Italian actor Nerio Bernardi in the role of the apostle in *Nero* and in the title role of David in *The Shepherd King*, along with Sandro Salvini, Guido Trento, Paulette Duval, Edy Darclea, Violet Mersereau, and several Italian performers. *Nero* and *The Shepherd King* were shot in rapid sequence in order to use not only the same cast but also all the other resources and sets. The synopsis for *Nero* in the *AFI Catalog* reads: "The spectacular scenes include portrayal of the Circus Maximus, chariot races, martyrdom of the Christians, the burning of Rome, and the charge of Roman legionnaires, who rescue Rome and eliminate Nero." It sounds indeed like the replica of an Italian historical film.

William Fox had been so impressed with the Italian historical spectacle in 1913 that "he made up his mind then and there to go all out for the production of motion pictures. . . . [In the 1920s, Fox] felt that the company was ripe for expansion and that future production called for more spectacles," wrote Edwards's son.[68]

> He assembled a company to go to Rome and film NERO on a grand scale with foreign artists. J. Gordon Edwards was the director . . . Louis Loeffler the cutter. I was also to keep script. . . . Henry Armetta was the property man. The rest of the cast were found in Rome, as were all technicians and artisans. The completed picture was a great spectacle filled with drama and action. . . . There was a mad chariot race with tens of thousands [of] spectators, marvelous trick photography [Harry Plimpton] and camera effects for scenes depicting the burning of Rome, lions devouring the Christians and the volcano erupting. . . . The company enjoyed the prospect of remaining in Rome for the filming of the selected 1922 spectacle, THE SHEPHERD KING."[69]

The adventurous tone of the report and the continuity of the experience in the making of the two films seem to indicate that this was indeed a positive interaction with the Roman set.

Herbert Howe, a journalist not unsympathetic to Mussolini,[70] published a long article in *Photoplay* on the making of the two films, "When in Rome do as the Caesars did." In revealing the different cultural attitudes of Americans and Italians in relation to historical verisimilitude, Howe indulged in both anti-Italian prejudice and excessive praise. He narrated, for instance, the construction, in Rome, of a gigantic temple of Saul—even bigger than the set built in Hollywood for *Intolerance*—but remarked specifically upon the slow progress of the construction, a recurring complaint in the history of making these films in Italy. Howe quipped about the traps into which American filmmakers fell, only to be chastised by an Italian journalist, such as the use of the sixteenth-century Trevi fountain ("I loftily assured him that we never spare expense on centuries"). The article was illustrated by a photo of Paulette Duval (Poppea in the film) in a quite improbably Deco costume aping a Roman toga. (In fact, the caption read "dolled up as the ancient vamp.") The Italian press was quick to identify and ridicule the more glaring errors committed by the Americans regarding historical detail, displaying a nationalist overreaction in line with the coeval advent of nationalist Fascism (fig. 3.1).

Howe also reported: "The fact that those democratic sovereigns, king Victor Emmanuel and Queen Elena, were expected to pay a visit at the Fox studio during filming activities indicates more nearly the real spirit of Italian hospitality." The oxymoron "democratic sovereigns," referring to the Savoy dynasty, signals the curiosity of democratic Americans toward such bizarre institutions of the old continent as kings and aristocracy. Even though by 1922 the Italian monarchy resembled a couple of operetta extras rather than a prestigious

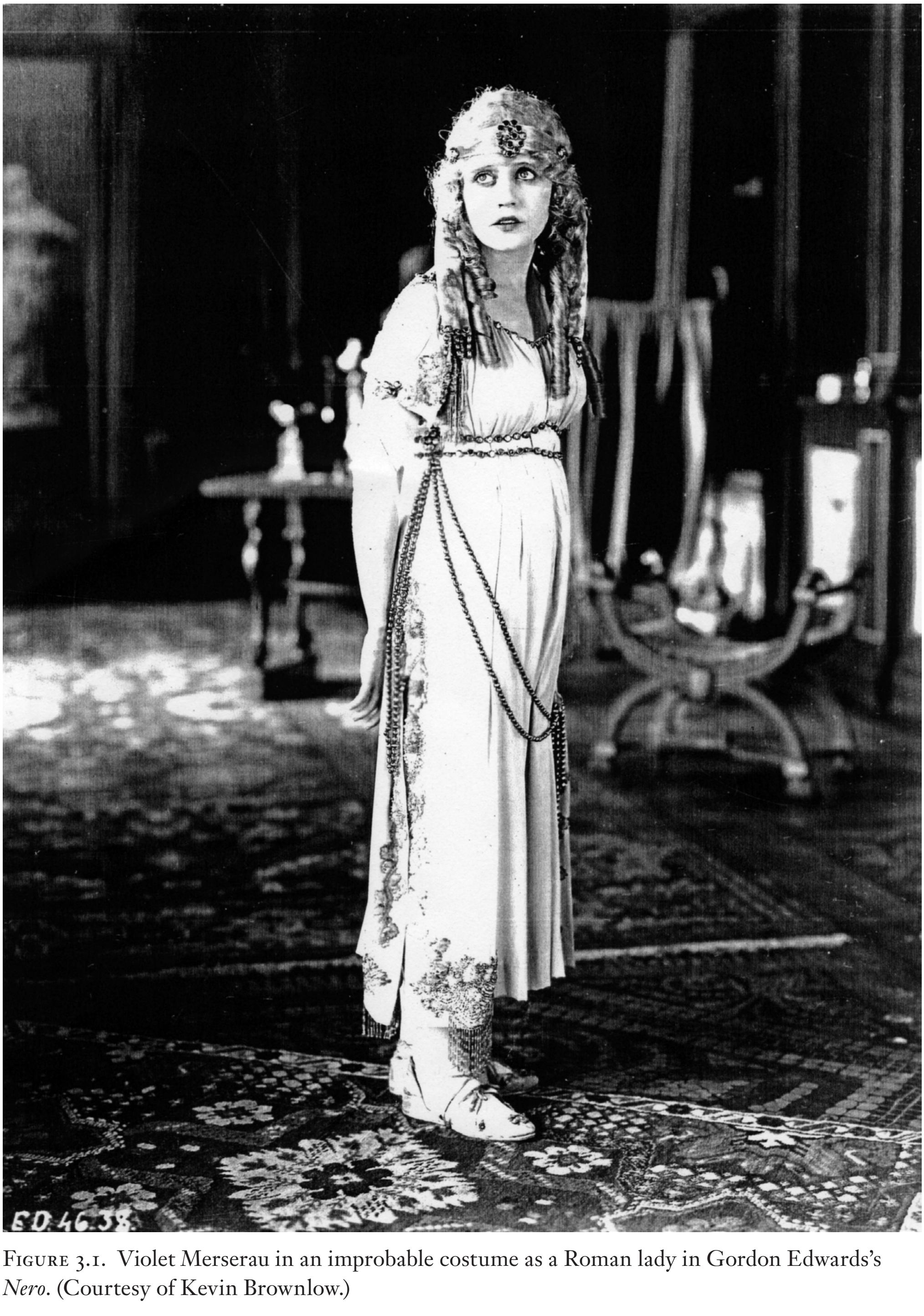


Figure 3.1. Violet Merserau in an improbable costume as a Roman lady in Gordon Edwards's *Nero*. (Courtesy of Kevin Brownlow.)

authority, it was still able to legitimize the American film presence in Italy through a visit, fleeting as it may have been, to the film set.

Running out of "courtesies" about the Rome of the Caesars, another image of Italy emerges, inhabited by quarrelsome people, thus fitting the stereotype of temperamental Italians, embedded in American cinema and literature. Howe wrote:

> I was informed that upon the occasion of the royal visit (providing it did transpire) a brass band of forty pieces would play. Naturally I inferred it was in honor of their majesties. Not at all! It was for the extras. The studio manager had read some place that music hath power to soothe wild beasts, so he was going to try it on the Roman mob. He admitted that he was very dubious as to its efficacy, dolefully recalling the fracas in the stadium when seven thousand "extras" were employed in the chariot-racing scene of "Nero."

Howe continued narrating the unruly behavior of the poor "extras" crammed in the heat of the sun and protesting that they were thirsty, and other episodes in which Italians were represented as noisy and unmanageable:

> After the noble Romans had at length been returned to their seats, with the aid of the two hundred soldier police, a political argument broke out in a box and other little disputes began exploding all along the line. Fortunately, a battery of twenty-seven cameras had been trained upon them during their more tranquil moments, for within two hours the entire stadium was a seething cauldron, and the police had to act as bouncers.

Political scuffles were not uncommon in 1922, but they also corresponded to the stereotype of the quarrelsome Italian, and they surface in phenomenal amounts in reports about these productions, without showing the least interest in explaining what the "political argument" may have been about. Howe went on to describe the mob's Mediterranean laziness: "Such temperamental mobsters, although paid but fifty cents a day, are expensive at any price. Such is the opinion of Mr. Carlos, the keeper of the Fox exchequer in Rome. For one thing, their 'day' ends at noon. Their health positively requires a siesta after lunch, and by the time they open their dewy lids again the light is too far gone for further filming." Anti-Italian prejudice runs throughout Howe's article, and even reemerges under the surface of the apparently laudatory portrait of actor Nerio Bernardi. He "spoke no English, and my Italian is comparable only to an organ-grinder's English" the *Photoplay* journalist noted, on the one hand revealing a constant difficulty on these sets, where nobody spoke the other's language and interpreters become powerful go-betweens; on the other hand, he cannot resist the reference to the organ-grinder—the most disturbing and enduring representation of the poor Italian. About Bernardi, Howe wrote: "For all the divinity of his roles Nerio has a lithesome, worldly air. . . . He was never quiet. When he was not acting before the camera he was rolling feverishly on the grass, bounding up to kiss the hand of some lady, tossing back his acanthus locks, arguing violently with a colleague, flirting boldly with a beautiful little girl, who had the face of an angel, but not, I fear, the temperament." This Italic idyll is somewhat irritating, but even though Howe's Bernardi ends up fitting the stereotype of the quarrelsome Italian as well as that of the Latin lover, the journalist does not discuss any other actor in the cast at such length. Instead, director Edwards, interviewed by Howe, spoke in glowing terms of Italian actors: “He was completely enamored by the charm, the friendliness and the fetching courtesy of these sunny people. As proof he pointed to his cast, entirely Italian save for Violet Merserau. But he could not speak with the same unbounded zeal of Jericho and Jerusalem, where some of the most spectacular scenes of *The Shepherd King* were staged.”

After trying in vain to hire extras in the tense religious situation of the Holy Land, “the bold filmers had to evacuate Jerusalem, return to Rome and there in a calmer atmosphere duplicate the walls of the holy city.” African expeditions, usually led by a second unit director, were a common detour in these productions, encouraged as they were by geographical proximity, but they also evoked an incognizant as well as disturbing association between Italy and Africa. However, the direct experience of North African ethnoreligious tensions made even the atmosphere of Rome at the time of the Fascist March seem “calmer.”

With the conventional style of a fan magazine, discussing costs and production values, Howe could not resist joking about the grandiose constructions of the sets, at the same time offering technical information on the Italian way of building them:

> I wager that William Fox when pursuing the expense accounts sent back from overseas wonders why he has to build so many ruins in Europe, which is supposed to be the home of them. . . . A consolation is supplied him in the low cost of construction. Saul’s Temple would have been an impractical expenditure in Hollywood. Even in Italy, where labor is comparatively cheap, it would have been a tremendous expense had the construction been of wood. The Italian method of building sets is ingenious and economic. Saul’s temple is but a skeleton of wood overlaid with *cameracana*, woven cane, which, covered with cement and painted, presents the appearance of solid stone. Although but a thing of straw it was sturdy enough to withstand some high winds that blew down several diffusers. The elaborate sculptural works represented in bass-reliefs, winged lions and Assyrian pillars, were also cheaper and much finer than could be had in the US, for Italian workmen are natural artists in clay.

Even the compliments addressed to Italians end on a diminishing tone—they were ingenious but “natural” artists, as if their work did not come from labor, tradition, knowledge, and techniques: “It is unquestionably cheaper to produce a big spectacle abroad with ‘extras’ at fifty cents, stars from fifty dollars and ‘sets’ at half-price than either in Hollywood or New York. The real monetary profit, however, is not gained so much in reducing the cost of the production but in increasing the earning power of the picture. The scenery and the atmosphere of America has [*sic*] been pretty well riddled by the cameras whereas that of Europe still offers novelty and fresh beauties.” In two sentences, Howe offers the rationale for making these films in Italy, with a positive note on the skill of the Italian craftsmen: “In *Nero* for instance, there is the scene depicting the burning of Rome for which a veritable city was built on a hill near present-day Rome.” He also quickly notes, “The modern stadium had been rigged up to represent the Circus Maximus of Nero’s time.” Thus, the sets were made not only of *cameracana*, or papier-mâché, but a real stadium had been transformed into the Circus Maximus—something which could not have happened without the cooperation of the Roman authorities.

In listing the exotic bestiary available to the films, as well as the thirty lions rented from all over Europe in order to have them devour Christians in *Nero*, he mentions the three Italian lions that had also appeared in *Teodora* (Leopoldo Carlucci, 1922), produced by Ambrosio, a Turin company. The exchange between the two national cinemas thus involved not only professional skills but also lions.[71]

Both *Nero* and *The Shepherd King*—now lost—were distributed in Italy as *Nerone* and *Re David* and received good (but not enthusiastic) reviews. They received a massive promotional campaign in the United States. The *Harrison Report*, an exhibitors' magazine, noted: "'Nero' is at once a gorgeous spectacle and a wonderful picture. Mr. Gordon Edwards's direction of this mammoth feature deserves all the praise that can be bestowed upon it; the acting and the carefully selected foreign artists in practically every scene defies [*sic*] criticism. All the principals do most commendable work, but Nerio Bernardi, in the Apostolic role, gives a performance that even a Booth or a Forrest could hardly surpass."[72] Bernardi was an important Italian actor, working in the legitimate theater for the prestigious Lucio D'Ambra company and enjoying a brilliant Italian film career (fig. 3.2). He had no further contacts with American film productions in Italy, nor did he move to the United States after this experience, even though he had good potential for (silent) Hollywood. Not only did the contemporary American press praise the work of Italian actors, American filmmakers too appreciated them and offered them professional opportunities. Edwards, for example, invited Guido Trento, who had played in both Fox films, to move to Hollywood. As mentioned, Trento was no minor actor in Italian cinema; he was also known for his patriotism. In fact, his last film in Italy was *La leggenda del Piave* (Mario Negri, 1924), which was inspired by E. A. Mario's famous World War I song. Starring Diomira Jacobini and Ida Carloni Talli, the film was produced by the Neapolitan Giuseppe Amato. After working on the Neapolitan set of King's *The White Sister*, Amato too went to Hollywood, where he stayed until the advent of sound. (Interestingly, Amato later produced *Bicycle Thief* and *La Dolce Vita*, indicating with his experience that the study of Italian and American film interactions indeed deserves further scrutiny.)

Trento was the only actor who went to Hollywood after working in the American productions in Italy, or at least the only one for whom this connection is documented.

Returning from Italy, Edwards did not find the same space he had occupied before in Hollywood cinema and died, heartbroken, on Christmas Day 1925.[73]

On the Italian front, it is not clear to what degree the Italian authorities were involved in these film productions. In 1922, they were busy with sociopolitical problems of such caliber and import that they probably had little time for such "futile" activities. The references to a possible visit by the king, the use of a stadium transformed into the Circus Maximus, and the number of extras, however, indicate that these foreign ventures were not so marginal for Italian institutions as they have been presumed to be.

These films also had an impact on the Italian community in the United States, and on its nationalistic pride, through the publicity they received, for example, in the newspaper

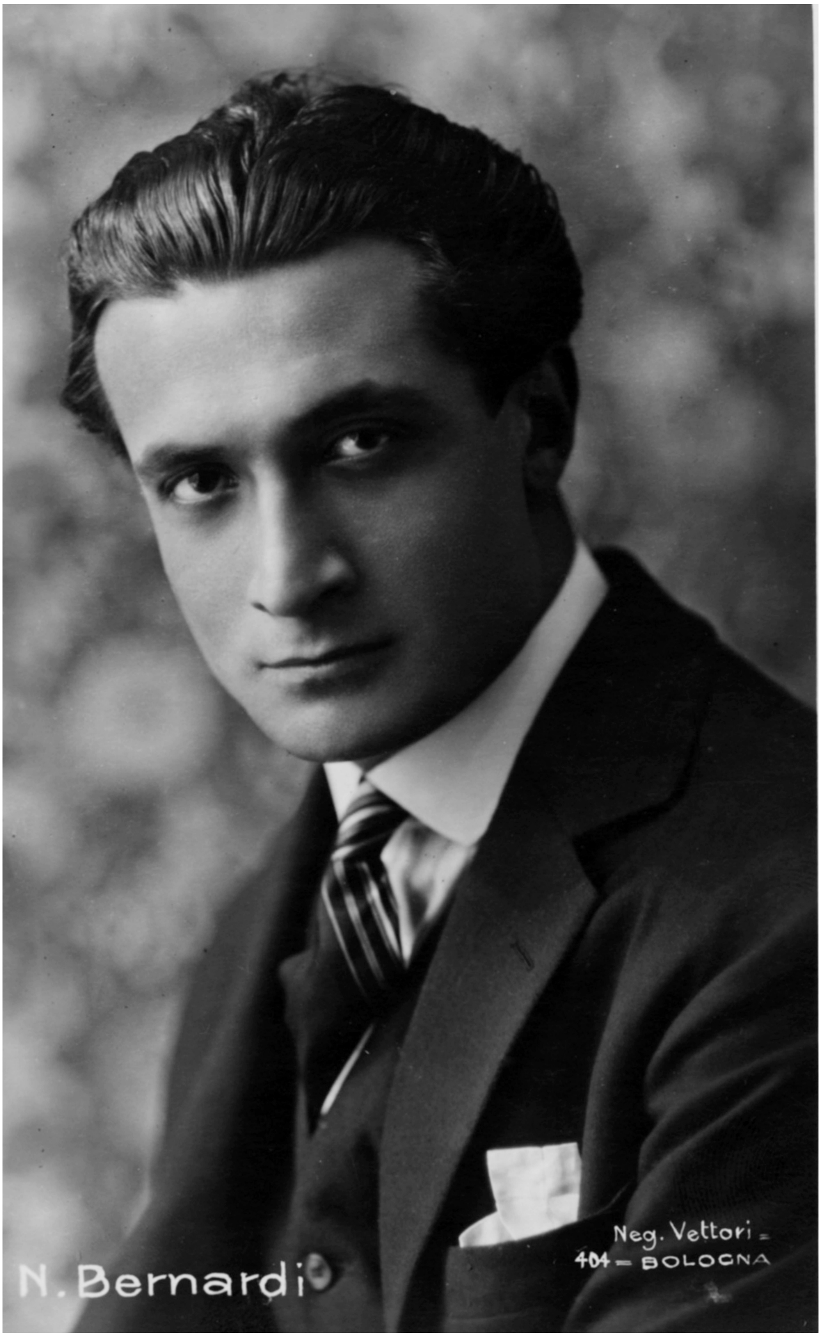


Figure 3.2. Nerio Bernardi, Italian stage actor and performer in Edwards's *Nero* (1922) and *The Shepherd King* (1923).

Il Progresso Italo-Americano; writes Bertellini: "The advertisement for the film [*Nero*], exhibited at the prestigious Lyric Theatre on West Forty-Second Street, also included an open letter signed by William Fox. . . . [The ad read:] *Nero* has been produced entirely in Italy, in the world's best scenic sites, and given that its participating artists were Italian, both

Italians and Americans ought to be rightly proud of this grandiose result."[74] In line with the policy of the "commodification" of European culture, the American appropriation of the beauty of Italian "scenic sites" and the work of Italian "participating artists" represents the mirror effect of these transcultural experiences, where American capital buys Italian artistic values and perceives this operation as their valorization.

The reports on the production of *Nero* and *The Shepherd King* show no signs of any "competition" with rising Fascism in the construction of imperial mythologies, while the scepter of international politics was already tight in the hands of the United States. Was it a coincidence that Americans produced their own imperial pictures—their *Ben Hur*, their *Quo Vadis?*, and their *Gladiator*—in Italy, the core of the European balance, precisely in the 1920s, 1950s, and 1990s, at the heights of their imperialist efforts?

Fitzmaurice's The Man from Home

In his autobiography, cinematographer Arthur C. Miller devoted a few pages to his film experiences in Europe in the early 1920s, working with George Fitzmaurice and his wife, screenwriter Ouida Bergère.[75] "After we finished *Three Live Ghosts* [in London], we had a long wait for Ouida Bergère to finish her next script, an adaptation from the play *The Man from Home*, which we planned to make in Rome. We started the picture there the latter part of October 1921, with Anna Q. Nilsson and Norman Kerry again in the cast. The leading man, James Kirkwood, arrived from New York. For background, we tried to use as much of beautiful Rome as we could."[76] Thus, the first film the Fitzmaurices made in Italy was a (silly) melodrama, *The Man from Home* (1922) produced by Adolph Zukor (the sponsor of the Italian realization of *The Eternal City* in 1914). Roy Overbaugh (the same cinematographer who shot King's *White Sister*) photographed it; Miller was his assistant. The *AFI Catalog* lists it as "filmed on location in Italy," and presents its confused plot: "Prince Kinsillo of Italy (Norman Kerry) wishes to repair his dwindling fortunes by marrying Genevieve (Anna Q. Nilsson), a wealthy American girl, whose guardian Daniel Forbes Pike (James Kirkwood) of Kokomo Indiana, comes to Italy. . . . En route through Italy, Pike meets the king traveling incognito . . . the king's mistress is murdered by the prince . . . guardian and girl go back to Kokomo together at the end."[77] The narrative associates Italy with decadent aristocracy, adultery, homicide, and falsehood, and makes the return to Kokomo, Indiana a happy ending. The Fitzmaurices therefore depicted a negative and regressive image of Italy, out of an operetta rather than elaborated from a direct experience of a rapidly (as well as turbulently) changing country. During the making of the film, the crew crossed a massive Fascist "parade."[78] In his autobiography, Miller argued that this was *the* Fascist March on Rome, but that event happened in October 1922, whereas *The Man from Home* was shot in 1921—either the dates of the film are wrong or the "parade" was not the march in question, but a Fascist demonstration at the time.

The Fitzmaurices' filmography includes *Society Exile* (1919) and *Bella Donna* (1923), both set, at least partially, in Venice, but without claims of location shooting, even though, *Bella Donna*, given its date of distribution (and the fact that its cinematographer was Miller), may contain material shot on location. Therefore, the Fitzmaurices appear highly motivated in their "journey to Italy" but probably more for touristic reasons than sociocultural curiosity. The choice of the narrative material for *The Man from Home* makes it hard to understand why it should have been shot in Italy. The *Harrison Report* of May 6, 1922, described it as "a mediocre melodrama, its only outstanding feature being the locations, which have been photographed in Italy. They are beautiful." In the *Morning Telegraph*, April 30, 1922, an ad in the section "This week at the Rivoli" read instead: "This is George Fitzmaurice's greatest production. . . . This is the first time any picture has ever been made on all of the *real* locations. When the story called for Kokomo, the company went to Kokomo. When it called for Italy, *the company went to Italy.* The beautiful bay of Naples, in the shadow of the Vesuvius, the glorious hills of Sorrento, the marvelous palaces and estates of princes, form the most beautiful backgrounds any motion picture ever had." The imprecise descriptions ("the hills of Sorrento"), the lack of reference to Rome (which was, according to Miller, the main site of the production), and the claim that this was the first American film shot on location abroad, suggest the improvisational nature of the shooting in Italy as well as a lack of coordination with the studio.[79] And yet a series of circumstances offered the Fitzmaurices the chance of a truly "historical" experience in Rome.

Mussolini as Himself: The Eternal City

The unexpected images of Benito Mussolini, showing him and the king of Italy reviewing the troops in Fitzmaurice's *The Eternal City* (1923), "as if the two leaders had been 'cajoled by Goldwyn himself into making guest appearances,'"[80] arouse the historian's curiosity.[81] Although Mussolini later received special attention in the American mass media—for example, in the (commercially successful) documentary *Mussolini Speaks*, produced by Columbia in 1933, with a commentary by the popular journalist Lowell Thomas—this early appearance of his in a fiction film is a unique media occurrence.

Adapted from Hall Caine's eponymous socialist novel, and already shot in Rome by Porter and Ford in 1914, Fitzmaurice transformed *The Eternal City* into a pro-Fascist film shot on location in Italy (through complex negotiations between Will H. Hays and the Italian Embassy) during, or soon after, the March on Rome. According to Brownlow, when Samuel Goldwyn and Fitzmaurice started production on the film in 1922, Mussolini refused to permit the shooting of a socialist novel in Rome.[82] Hays, who had been nominated head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) the previous year, "personally enlisted the help of the Italian ambassador for the Rome-based production" of the film, writing, in an a posteriori account: "I called up Prince Caetani, the Ambassador to the United States from Italy, and I told him we wanted to make this picture correctly. I asked him if he was interested. He came to New York the next day and we spent the afternoon together. Three times he visited me. He appointed a representative, and for three weeks, this representative sat with the producer, the scenario writer and the director developing the scenario for *The Eternal City.* A member company went to Italy to make the picture."[83] But why would the newly appointed Hays pay such direct and prolonged attention to the case? Why was making the film in Italy so important that it merited making a deal with the newly formed Fascist government, whose violent takeover of power should have suggested a more careful political approach?

The very fact that the Italian ambassador, a few months after the Fascist takeover, would occupy his time on the production of an American film in Italy highlights early media awareness of the Fascist regime. It also reveals the social irresponsibility of Italian diplomats, engaged in the production and defense of the image of Italy abroad, rather than in the protection of the interests of Italian immigrants in the United States (given that the quotas restricting immigration were decided in 1921).

Even though Hall Caine strongly objected to turning his novel into a text that could appeal to the Fascist regime, having already invested in location shooting in Rome, the production went ahead:

> They had been promised full civilian and military cooperation for a film which supported Fascist policy and argued that a free adaptation of the story was the only way out of the impasse. . . . "To this I objected," wrote Caine, "that it would be false to the theory of my story to put Mussolini and Fascism into the places of Christian Socialism and the disciple of Mazzini; but the ultimate result of prolonged and sometimes painful legal negotiations was that I consented that an independent scenario should be written by another author, under her own name, and coupled with the name of my book. This has now been done, and the film shortly to be released will present a picture (no doubt vivid and faithful) not of the triumph of Socialism as dreamt of and desired by me, but of the triumph of Fascism as foreseen and desired and brought to pass by Signor Mussolini."[84]

The original story had more than one political problem and had been banned in Italy, as Porter had discovered when shooting his film. The result of the rewrites of Caine's *The Eternal City* at the MPPDA, involving, according to Hays, Bergère, Fitzmaurice, a producer, and a representative of Italian diplomacy, was a pro-Fascist film, which explained the rise of the movement within the same interpretative paradigm Fascism utilized.

The Eternal City cast Barbara La Marr (Roma), Bert Lytell (David Rossi), Lionel Barrymore (Baron Bonelli), Montagu Love (Minghelli), and Richard Bennett (Bruno). The *AFI Catalog* 1921–1930 proposes this synopsis:

> David Rossi, an Italian orphan, is cared for by Bruno, a tramp. Dr. Roselli, a pacifist, adopts him and rears him together with Roma, his daughter. They grow up and pledge their love. Dr. Roselli dies, David and Bruno join the army after war breaks out, and Roma becomes a famous sculptor, with the financial assistance of Baron Bonelli, the secret leader of the Communist Party. David joins the Fascists and becomes Mussolini's right-hand man. He meets Roma and denounces her as Bonelli's mistress; then he leads the Fascists against the Bolsheviks and kills Bonelli. Roma takes the blame for Bonelli's murder, thereby convincing David that she never betrayed him.

Since only an excerpt of the film survives, it is difficult to establish how accurate this synopsis is, especially in the first part, which seems too close to the novel, referring to contradictory pacifist elements. However, part of the lost picture can be reconstructed from a review of the *Daily Worker*:

> The rich art patron, Baron Bonelli, is made into a war profiteering capitalist, who seeks to become Dictator of Italy by the road of the proletarian revolution. The wickedness of the "red strikers" is pictured by putting axes into the hands of a crowd of roughly dressed "extras" and setting them to making kindling out of a railroad coach. . . . The brave youths return from the war, and find that their medals and banners are not properly respected. So they organize into mobs, and fling stilettoes bearing anti-strike warnings at darkened doorways. When the reds organize to counter-attack, they are dispersed by the police, but the title-writer explains that Italy was fortunate in having a King with enough sense to turn the government over to Mussolini, the "man of the people." Mussolini and the King appear in person, of course.[85]

In this regard the *AFI Catalog* notes that the film "climaxes with a view of Mussolini on the balcony of the royal palace, besides the king, reviewing the entrance of his troops into the city." The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) has preserved the last two reels of this lost film, thus it is possible to discuss the presentation of events with any precision only in the final part of the text. Indeed, the surviving excerpt presents images of Mussolini and the king together at the *Altare della Patria*, while the king appears with other dignitaries, and not Mussolini, on the balcony. These specific shots were constituted of documentary materials.

The AFI synopsis already reveals the diegetic role played by Il Duce in the film, since David is his "right-hand man," but the film itself "shows" this crucial detail on the screen, documenting the participation of the Fascist leader in its production.

The Eternal City is a spectacular modern drama in black shirts, showing the violent conflict between the "Red Mob" and "the Fascisti" in mass scenes, with thousands of extras moving around in different parts of the "eternal city." The excerpt presents images of riots, as the titles explain: "I fascisti [*sic*] at the Colosseum" (fig. 3.3), and "The Red mob swarmed in the old Roman Baths." There is also a dramatic scene of the "King's Lancers answering the riot call" that is, chasing the "Reds" on horseback and beating them ferociously. The storming of Baron Bonelli's palace by a mob is also impressive and recalls contemporary representations of the storming of the Winter Palace.

Mobs fighting in the streets evoke the social disorder of Italy in the post–World War I years. A title explains how Mussolini reacted to this situation: "And then came the great and final triumph for the *Fascisti* when Mussolini led an army, even more picturesque than Garibaldi's famous thousand, through the gates of the historic Roman city." The title is intriguing, because, even if it is true that Garibaldi was a popular hero all over the world in the nineteenth century, his fame was probably fading by the 1920s. Could American filmmakers have constructed this parallel between the "Black Shirts" and the "Red Shirts" of Garibaldi's Thousand on their own? Could the American screenwriter Ouida Bergère, who had written such a silly mess with *The Man from Home* ever have come up with such a line? After all, she did not seem familiar with, or well disposed toward, Italian culture. There is a legitimate suspicion that Mussolini might have suggested the phrase: given that he was a journalist, a writer, and a dramatist of sorts, he might even have penciled some ideas on the script. Cinematographer Miller's memoirs document the fact that he had read the script (and that he was pleased with it):

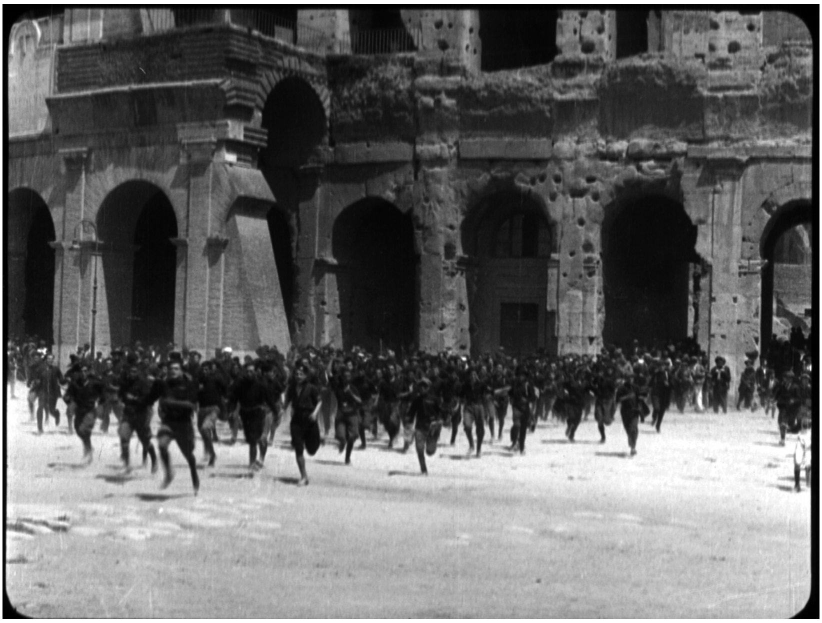


Figure 3.3. The Fascisti after a mass meeting at the Coliseum in George Fitzmaurice's *The Eternal City* (1923). (Courtesy of MOMA, New York.)

> In her screen adaptation of *The Eternal City*, Ouida Bergère had changed the story to interject Mussolini and the Fascist movement. Mussolini was so impressed with the idea that his office was open to us at any time. We were assigned several of his black-shirt men to hold the crowds back, especially when we worked in small mountain towns. They did anything we asked of them. One Sunday we shot in five different locations in Rome, walking two thousand extras from one location to another and ending at the Colosseum.[86]

Mussolini was so impressed with the script that, not only did he assist the production very generously, but he might have contributed some narrative details such as the lack of respect for World War I medals and banners as the reason why David became a Fascist. Other details include Fascist violence against the strikers during the Red Week and the support the police and the king gave to the *Fascisti* (fig. 3.4). Or perhaps the Americans had already absorbed the early image Fascism had created for itself and appropriated it, realizing how useful it could be in the fight against Bolshevism.

The collapse of Italian liberal democracy is aptly summed up in the (today dramatically embarrassing) title card, "It was fortunate for Italy that it had a really great and sensible King who received the new liberator and tendered to him the Premiership," followed by the newsreel images of the king and Mussolini arriving at *Altare della Patria*. Then the film presents a medium shot of Mussolini signing a document, while another title card reads: "One of the first acts of the new government was to release the patriot, David Rossi" (fig. 3.5). In the next shot, David's sweetheart, Roma, is waiting on a garden terrace facing the *Altare della Patria*, where the celebrations of the March on Rome are taking place. She is dressed in a white tunic like in a Lawrence Alma-Tadema symbolist painting, while David

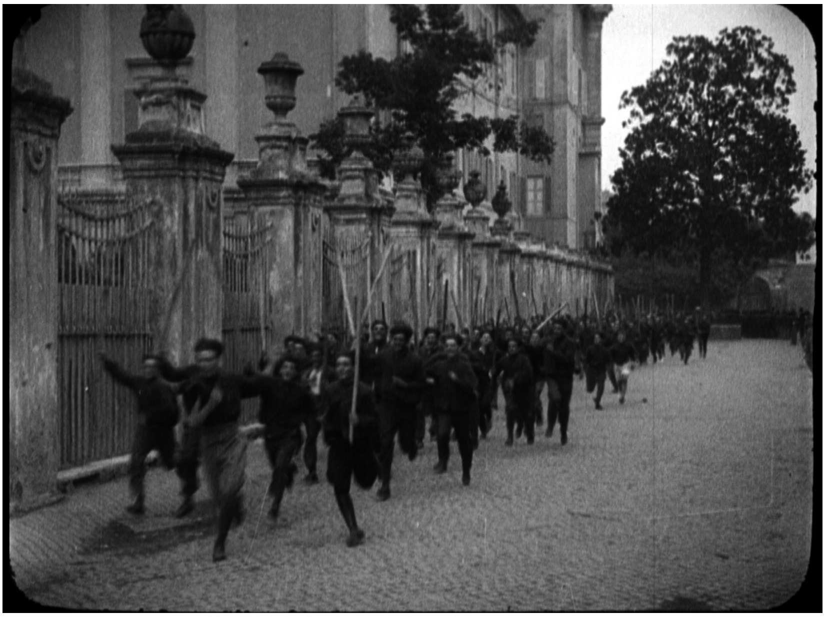


FIGURE 3.4. Black shirts chasing the Red Mob in *The Eternal City* (1923). (Courtesy of MOMA, New York.)

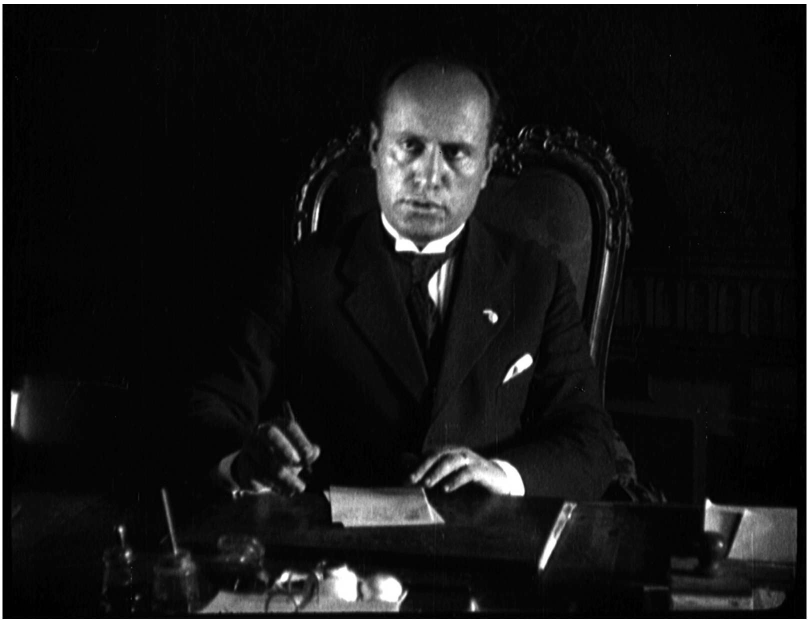


FIGURE 3.5. Mussolini's special appearance in *The Eternal City*, shot in the Duce's studio. (Courtesy of MOMA, New York.)

points to the square beneath them with his right arm raised, as if in a Fascist salute. Before the final fade out, David and Roma exchange a kiss against the background of a beautiful Roman sunset. The very last image is a postcard view of the Tiber with the *cupolone* (the dome of St. Peter's) in the background. Thus, the new leader, Mussolini, like a *deus ex machina*, brings narrative closure to this American prestige production abroad, revealing America's early fascination with Il Duce.

Importantly, the medium shot of Mussolini signing the document was photographed specifically for the film. Arthur Miller wrote in fact: "I was in Mussolini's office, I asked him if I could take a picture of him. He agreed and sat behind his desk for the portrait without asking any questions. Mussolini spoke English very slowly and in a soft voice."[87] In the film, Mussolini sits at his desk, wearing a black business suit (not a black shirt) and hesitantly looks into the camera, as if expecting approval from Miller and the audience: it is a short but effective performance, and totally lacking in any of the histrionics of his balcony newsreel appearances. It is a very controlled self-presentation, almost as if Mussolini were aware of the opportunity this film was offering him to appear in the role of the "good guy" to the American, and therefore, international, public.

After the event, Miller added his own comments on Fascism to the account of the shooting of this scene, still expressing approval of Il Duce in relation to the early phase of his government: "Considering the man he was in 1924 and what he had done in the short time he had been in power since our first visit to Rome [in 1921] to convert from steam to electric railroads, remove the great number of beggars from the streets, the new cleanliness of Rome, and the drastic change in the attitude of his citizens, it is difficult to understand how he could have turned into such a despicable individual."[88] The excerpt also revealed the uncredited participation of Italian immigrant actor William Ricciardi in the role of an auctioneer, selling the clothes and furniture Roma wants to dispose of. As already mentioned, Ricciardi was a prestigious figure on the Italian stage in New York. In 1932, he worked for Fitzmaurice again, in the film adaptation of Pirandello's *As You Desire Me*. His presence in *The Eternal City* recalls the analogous (possible) use of Armetta in Edwards's films and the presence of Frank Puglia in *Romola*, as if American film productions in Italy felt a need for the cultural mediation of an immigrant performer. Since it is documented that most of the interior shots of *The Eternal City* were filmed back in the United States, casting him might simply have been a way of guaranteeing the *Italianità* of the production.

The rapport between the American crew and Mussolini seems to have soured later when Il Duce learned about Fitzmaurice's previous (anti-)Italian film, *The Man From Home*. "He demanded to see Fitzmaurice, who left for New York, and Miller sneaked out of Italy via Venice, with the last of the negatives."[89] Most probably the negative in question was not that of *The Eternal City*, which Mussolini would not have wanted to suppress, but that of *The Man from Home*, as the detour to Venice suggests.

Miller adds a touch of adventure and drama to the escape: "If the blackshirt boys had gotten their hands on the film that would have been the end of it."[90] This conclusion of the story might be an easy way out from an embarrassing connection with Fascism, but it also emphasizes the lack of awareness of the American filmmakers. They thought that making a film in Italy was going to be perceived as a compliment in itself, even when they depicted the country through prejudiced eyes, as in *The Man from Home*, to the point of infuriating Mussolini, who was, in fact, a passionate fan of American cinema.

In an interview with the *Morning Telegraph* (July 13, 1924), Ouida Bergère distanced herself from the experience, stating that when making *The Eternal City*, "the Italian Government offered so many obstacles that before the story reached the screen it ha[d] been shorn of most of the realities that existed in it at first." (The date of the interview, 1924, when Mussolini was solidly in power, possibly grants her good faith during the making of the film and documents her belated dislike for the Fascist intrusion.) *The Eternal City* was the last film Bergère wrote. "I was in an unhappy state of mind and very tired when I returned from Italy," she confided to Kevin Brownlow in an unpublished interview, so much so that she left the task of writing the intertitles to John Emerson and decided to abandon screenwriting for good;[91] just like Porter and Edwards, she brought her film career to a close after her experience in Italy.

A clipping dated January 24, 1924 (probably from *Variety*), reviewing the film, criticized the adaptation as too "tied up to [the] present day," and reacted as if Fascism were a matter of interest only for "the Italian colony": "Goldwyn's opus aims more to tie up present day interest in the political upheaval of Italy than to develop the human interest in the story itself. . . . The production, which was made in Rome, is in reality a record of Italian politics since the war. . . . Perhaps there is no good reason why the original should not be revamped but this method of revision gives the story a special interest only to the Italian colony."[92] Instead of discussing the rash decision of mixing Mussolini "in person" with a (weak) love story, the reviewer insists on the Italian angle, emphasizing that a third transnational party in this story is the Italian American audience, probably one of the targets of this American strategy:

> The 7.30 house received the picture quietly up to the introduction of poses of the real Mussolini. Then it burst into a demonstration. So deliberate has been the intent of the present producers to give the picture historic rather than romantic coloring, that the lovers are rather an anti-climax, the real finish being a view of Mussolini (present premier of Italy) standing on a balcony of the royal palace besides the king and reviewing the entrance of his troops into the city. This is a fine spectacle but it kills off Sir Hall Caine's story.

The same reviewer criticizes "the historic coloring," but not the representation of Fascism, and specifies: "If the picture gets anywhere it will be due to some of the smashing bits of mob effects and to the assemblage of stars. . . . The scenic features, particularly the noble Roman palaces, woodlands and scenic shots, are splendid."

Agnes Smith in her column "The Screen in Review" in *Picture Play Magazine* discussed the "updating" of the film in less benevolent terms:

> Hall Caine's story "The Eternal City," was slightly out-of-date when Samuel Goldwyn sent his company to Italy, so there was nothing for Ouida Bergère to do but to make the scenario snappy and up-to-the-minute by throwing large slices of Hall Caine into the Atlantic Ocean. "The Eternal City" looks like a newsreel plus a fashion show. Mussolini, Italy's pet fire eater, is the star of the newsreel section, while Barbara La Marr acts as the fashion model. When Miss La Marr, all draped and bedecked, cuts loose in "The Eternal City," she makes the famous ruins of Rome look more like ruins than ever.[93]

To define Mussolini as an "Italian pet fire eater" was not only offensive, considering that he was the prime minister of a foreign state, but also revealed a superficial understanding of the events in Italy, as well as Smith's perception of the starring role of Il Duce in the film. The reference to fashion, however, is quite telling, because the existing excerpt from the film confirms the use of excessively elaborate clothing for La Marr which stood in stark contrast to the bleak conditions of the city in the exterior shots. This "Hollywood elegance" was perhaps meant to compete with the excesses of costume design in contemporary Italian diva films, which was equally in contrast with the social climate of the country. Like most reviewers, Smith was more concerned with the "love story" than the sociopolitical detail of the film. However, she appreciated the locations: "And, of course, there are the gorgeous Roman backgrounds and some swirling and impressive mob scenes. George Fitzmaurice, the director, photographed Rome with the reverence of a man who is getting up an illustrated catalogue for tourists."

In the end, what always seems to be appreciated in these American films shot in Italy are the locations, the Grand Tour on film, the crowd scenes, and the "mob effects." At that time, mass scenes represented in cinema exalted "the splendor of the crowd," as Vachel Lindsay defined it[94]—that is, the fascination with (or repulsion for) the anonymous masses, ignoring the delicate connotative relation between the term and the concepts of *mass*, *mob*, *people*, and *crowd*, which was being investigated by scholars and politicians alike in those years. The films appear to have been made outside of history, with the incapacity to see, or interpret, reality even in the midst of one of the most crucial contemporary events: the March on Rome.

This early example of the ideological convergence between American cinema and Italian Fascism confirms Mussolini's popularity in Hollywood (and in Washington, DC), a fascination with the "man of action and order" just when he was violently doing away with democratic political practices.

Will Hays was never embarrassed about having supported this production. "We made a picture that pleased Italy, pleased Mussolini himself; and we told the story of Italy as Italy would have it told, that all other nations might understand it."[95] But why did he invest so much effort in making this film in Italy? According to Ruth Vasey, "A more common form of diplomatic contact took place when projects were filmed abroad. The cultivation of official favor was important in these instances, both because it expedited practical matters surrounding production and because it enhanced the American's prestige and trading status."[96] The MPPDA's motivation in dealing with the Fascist government was indeed to enhance the still fragile international status of the American film industry through prestigious productions abroad, and to increase its trading power in Italy. At the time when *The Eternal City* was shot in 1914, the Italian cinema was at the peak of its powers, yet decline had already set in by the time the Fitzmaurice shot his version of the story, and so there was an opportunity to erode the roots of a possible competitor. Besides which, making films abroad and therefore spending money in the host country could sweeten the deal for the authorities and, later, facilitate film trade. By the end of the 1920s, Italian screens rarely presented national products, and proposed Hollywood films instead, which presumably Mussolini did not consider ideologically dissonant. Furthermore, in the 1920s the United States was prey to the growing Red Scare, and even Mussolini could become a defense against the risk of a communist revolution. Italian Fascism interested Hays, and it fascinated many moguls, who were, and would long remain, fervently anticommunist.[97]

Strangely enough, neither of the film versions of *The Eternal City* was distributed in Italy. Porter's film was an adaptation of a banned book; however, considering Mussolini's marked interest in the making of Fitzmaurice's film, the lack of any Italian distribution seems surprising, unless one looks at the picture through Italian eyes and perceives the naivety of the presentation of the advent of Fascism. For Mussolini, making *The Eternal City* was a foreign affairs operation to reassure Italian immigrants, American audiences, and the middle classes of the world that he was the "man of the people," a benevolent father figure, who had been able to crush Bolshevism. But Italians knew how he had done it, and he probably did not wish to remind them. On the other hand, *The Eternal City* did allow the Fascist regime to exploit this American film production in order to "spectacularize" itself abroad, proposing a positive image on the world's screens from which Italian cinema was rapidly disappearing.

On December 29, 1923, the head of the reviewing staff for the *Exhibitors' Herald*, J. Ray Murray, selected *Anna Christie*, *The Eternal City*, *The White Sister*, *Scaramouche*, and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* as the "Year's Big Films," choosing two films shot in Italy and four out of five films with "European" settings and characters. The American film industry of the mature silent period was developing a cosmopolitan strategy that encouraged it to travel across the Atlantic, in both physical and imaginary terms. The "Europeanization" of themes, settings, and personnel in silent Hollywood constitutes the core of the construction of the American "irresistible empire," although the imperial project was never limited to Europe.

Lillian Gish in Rome, Naples, and Florence

Not all American productions shot in Italy had such direct contact with the regime, but its presence is always traceable in the background. This is also true in the case of *The White Sister* (1923) and *Romola* (1923), directed by Henry King and starring Lillian Gish, flanked by Ronald Colman in his debut. Produced by Inspiration Pictures and distributed by Metro, the films were shot in Italy in that fateful period (1922–23) when Fascism was seizing power.

The White Sister was set in modern times, during the Italian-Turkish war to conquer Libya (1911–12), and was shot in Naples, Sorrento, Capri, Rome, and Tivoli. *Romola* was a Renaissance costume film shot in Florence. Both pictures had a literary source—Francis Marion Crawford of the Saracinesca series and George Eliot, respectively—offering cultural validation through these widely popular novels; and both could exploit the natural and historic-artistic potential of Italian locations.

According to the *AFI Catalog*, in *The White Sister*:

> [Angela Chiaromonte (Lillian Gish),] heir to a vast Italian estate, is left penniless and homeless, when her father dies and her half-sister, the Marchesa di Nola, destroys the

> will, dividing the property between the two daughters. Angela's fiancé, Giovanni Severini (Ronald Colman), goes to war in Africa, promising marriage on his return. When reports of his death arrive, Angela joins a convent. Severini, taken prisoner, escapes to Italy and there meets Angela, whom he tries to persuade to renounce her vows. Angela rejects him, unable to leave the order. Severini dies helping the townspeople escape the erupting Vesuvius.

The plot recalls Italian melodramas of the time, even if orphan girls and impoverished aristocrats were recurrent elements in American films dealing with Italian women too. As *La suora bianca*, *The White Sister* was a popular drama on the Italian immigrant stage too; indeed, it was the most successful play of the Giglio company in New York: the nun's torment, divided between Christ and a young officer, was quite titillating. But the casting of Lillian Gish as Angela moves the project away from the implicit model of the diva film, because of the young actress's features and film personality: she was a fair, fragile Victorian beauty. In contrast, the make-up and performance style of her scheming sister, la Marchesa (played by Gail Kane) is evidently modeled after the vampish and Mediterranean look of the Italian divas of the time. The contrast between the blond good girl and the dark and sexy southern beauty is as typical a juxtaposition as the white rider against the black bandit seen in westerns throughout American film history.

Crawford's worn-out narrative acquires a new vitality from the open and vivacious spaces of authentic Neapolitan views: the narrow *vicoli* (alleys), ragged boys with guitars and mandolins, the impervious slope of the volcano's crater, the busy harbor, and the postcard image of Vesuvius still sending up a wreath of smoke. A fascinated and curious glance scours the natural and anthropological landscape, with a freshness capable of raising the picture from the level of the original gloomy feuilleton that oozes patriotism and Catholicism, to an open-air travelogue. As always in Naples, reality breaks through, even in the most calculated of Hollywood films. The shots in the Neapolitan harbor show curious bystanders looking into the camera or spying on the American stars when Angela (Lillian Gish) says goodbye to Giovanni (Ronald Colman) as he leaves for the colonial war in Africa. But, there seem to be no reports about the location shooting of this film in the Italian press.

However, the fervent patriotic sentiment of the picture is quite unexpected. When Angela encourages her fiancé to enlist, arguing that to serve one's country is an honor, these seem words more suitable to an Italian heroine of Fascist cinema than to an American star, who was probably totally unaware of the brutality of this colonial war. The promotional material presents also her prayer at the monument "to the Officers of the Italian Army Killed in the African Campaign". Perhaps these manifestations of (Italian) nationalism were the price demanded by the regime for making a film in Italy. But this ideological surrender ended up presenting Italian colonial nationalism as if it were the same sentiment as World War I patriotism, although the film did not explicitly identify the "war" in question as the Libya colonial war.

The casting of a popular American actor such as Ronald Colman as an Italian officer in Libya (or Bert Lytell as Mussolini's right-hand man in *Eternal City*) might, from today's vantage point, appear incongruous, pointing to an inexplicable choice of politically quite committed narrative material, or betray quite simply a very superficial knowledge and understanding of recent Italian history.

The sets of *The White Sister* included old aristocratic palaces and ancient convents built with great attention to detail. The care in their reconstruction, documented in interviews, was often seen as a mark of the skilled Italian crew. Diametrically opposed to Howe's opinion, director King noted: "The Italians are the hardest-working people I ever saw. . . . They *want* to get the right effect. They *want* to please you. . . . I think that a great deal of the trouble the *Ben Hur* people had in Italy was due to a lack of understanding for the people. I was there at the same time they were, and I had no trouble at all."[98] This comment emphasizes the diverse attitudes American filmmakers had toward Italian craftsmen; however, the promotional materials for these films confirm that there was a general appreciation for the Italian work on set construction and design.

Under the art direction of Robert Haas, the film used highly skilled carpenters and craftsmen to fully exploit the Italian experience in set décor and was shot in ancient aristocratic villas following the style of the Italian dramas of the day (which occasionally used the elegant mansions of the aristocratic producers.) For the hunt scene, for instance, the extras were real Roman aristocrats; in the sequence in which Lillian Gish takes her vows, the consultant was no less than the "head ceremonial director from the Vatican."[99] Art and culture, but also nature played their part. Among the great protagonists of the movie is Vesuvius, the volcano, which resolves the narrative in its destructive power, with a spectacular concluding eruption documented by the American crew. "For the volcano scenes of *The White Sister*, I went to the Vesuvius," recalled King, who risked being burnt to death in the main crater, but he was able to obtain very impressive images of this explosive natural force."[100]

The "World Premiere" took place "before a more interesting assembly, which included persons prominent in society, distinguished politicians, well-known authors and writers, screen celebrities and heads of the motion picture industry" according to a *New York Times* review (September 6, 1923). This selected audience is in itself indicative of the aesthetic and cultural project behind the production.

The elegant theater program printed for the occasion read: "Lillian Gish in the Henry King production of 'The White Sister'" emphasizing landscape and the artistic-figurative investment. "Pictorial perfection and the extreme accuracy of detail has been attained in the Henry King production of the 'White Sister' starring Lillian Gish and the fascinating locale of the story doubly accentuated by actually filming the screen version within the confines of Italy's land of sunshine, romance and the historical shrines."[101] Landscape, "credited" immediately after Gish's name in the brochure, through a rich documentation transforms the location shooting into the main production value of *The White Sister*. The program does not refer to the story at all, perhaps to avoid its implications with Catholicism (and Italian colonialism).

The promotional material was printed as a refined theater program, confirming the high profile of the film. The first page of the booklet publicized the cast boasting numerous Italian actors, such as Gustavo Serena, one of the main personalities of Italian silent cinema, who played Giovanni's father, "vulcanologist Ugo Severini." The indication that Italian actors participated either "by courtesy of the Teatro Costanzi" or were associated with the UCI, documents formal contacts between Inspiration Pictures and both the Italian theater and the Italian film industry. The cast also included photographer James Abbe in the role of Lieutenant Rossini. The technical crew involved Italian assistant photographer Fernando Risi, who had cophotographed *Sant'Ilario*.

The booklet documented the locations with individual photos, whose captions do not "narrate" the image (as in conventional promotional materials, which usually relate the shot to the action in the film) but rather identify the place as in postcards. "The Bay of Sorrento" for instance, is a panoramic shot of the beautiful bay. There is also "Street scene in Tivoli" and "Hillside Overlooking Tivoli," in this case, without any particularly attractive feature of the landscape. "Old Roman Archway of Tivoli" does not explain why there are masses of people crossing the monument. Other captions—such as "Lillian Gish before an Old Roman Fountain in an Italian Palace Near Rome," "Members of *The White Sister* Company Before an Old Palace Near Rome," and "Members of *The White Sister* Company on the Grounds of an Old Palace Near Rome"—suggest the setting in authentic ancient villas, loaned to the American production by Italian aristocrats. This production detail exemplifies the involvement of Inspiration Pictures with the Italian aristocracy—like the American writers and artists of the past, avoiding contact with ordinary "Italian people." A preconceived image of Italy always prevailed over the actual experience.

"Lillian Gish, Ronald Colman and Group of Street Musicians Before Wall of the ex-Kaiser villa at Sorrento" is another disquieting caption, identifying the setting, a stone wall, animated by a group of poorly dressed street musicians, who would inevitably remind American audiences of organ grinders and ragged orphans in Little Italy, placed here with a taste for the picturesque.[102]

The central page is devoted to a large picture of Vesuvius, which reads: "The world's most famous volcano with its seething fire of death and flow of molten lava furnished the thrilling background for heart-gripping episodes of *The White Sister*." This is the only narrative caption in the program, and it immediately establishes the centrality of the volcano in the film, the *deus ex machina* of the finale, which solves the impossibility of the sentimental relationship between a nun and an officer through the ultimate sacrifice of Captain Severini to save the city's inhabitants from the eruption. Thus, *The White Sister* presents Naples without its idyllic seaside views but instead focuses on Vesuvius—a seething monster, a disquieting warning of the menace contained in the bowels of the earth. The volcano is a symbolic image of Naples and the Italian south that continues to intrigue cultural scholars such as Nelson Moe, who has retraced the history of this complex icon in *The View from the Vesuvius*, or filmmakers such as John Turturro, who opened his film on Neapolitan songs, *Passione* (2010), with an intensely rhythmic song about Vesuvius. The volcano can be seen as an evocation of fire, danger, and heat—an indirect evocation of the image of Naples as Africa as well as a "devils' paradise."

Unexpectedly some photos do refer to shooting in North Africa: "Scenes in the Tunisian desert" shows Arab horsemen in a medium-long shot, and "Ronald Colman at the City Gate of Tunis" shows a uniformed man from afar in front of a gate and some palm trees. In fact, "A second unit traveled to Tripoli (Libya) to take authentic desert scenes" according to Christine Leteux. "The great photographer James Abbe, who took stills of the whole shooting, traveled with that second unit together with actor Ronald Colman. Abbe himself appears in the film as a dying soldier."[103] This so far unknown detail of the African shooting of *The White Sister* poses an interesting question, given that the promotional material describes the photos as taken in Tunis, a far less ideologically loaded African destination than Libya—a decontextualized exotic Africa of deserts, palm trees, and camels, and not the site of the tragic military events of the colonial war. Other American productions in Italy extended their itinerary to the Black Continent: *The Shepherd King* and *Ben Hur* traveled to Africa too. If this dislocation is justified in the case of biblical or historical films, movies with modern settings (such as *The White Sister* and *Bella Donna*) may have traveled to Africa as an exotic deviation, the offspring of Anglo-Saxon symbolist culture. This association of Italy with Africa, however, was not without cultural and ideological implications.[104] The geography of this cinema in fact can easily move Italy outside Europe, pushing it through Venetian icons toward the East and along the southern Italian landscapes toward Africa. Italy was indeed at the crossroads of an imaginary geography, capable of diverse functions, among which the touristic and Eurocentric aesthetic of the Grand Tour usually dominates, but where detours are always possible, suggesting a disquieting mobility of the imaginary.

The already mentioned photo titled "Lillian Gish at the Monument to the Officers of the Italian Army Killed in the African Campaign" deserves special comment, in that, unlike other Roman sites, the monument is of scarce interest from an artistic point of view. Lillian Gish, already in her nun's outfit, offers some flowers at the monument, mourning the supposed death of Giovanni. The image communicates implicit solidarity with Italian colonial militarism, perhaps directed at the Italian audience (this film was actually distributed in Italy) or at Italians in America. But it also legitimizes Fascism and its values (most of all the soon-to-come imperial dream) within a disturbing synthesis of the Fascist "sword and altar" binomial interpreted by Lillian Gish—the symbol of Victorian innocence within the Hollywood silent star system.

The photos in the brochure also reveal the artistic references in the iconography, emphasizing the pictorial elements behind the composition of the shots. "The Marchesa Dies in the Arms of the White Sister" evokes a classical Pietà: the central figure of Lillian Gish, at the foot of the altar, pitifully holds in her arms the outstretched body of her dying sister; to the side, a priest, kneeling and praying, in profile (fig. 3.6). This frontal composition, inspired by Italian Renaissance paintings, incongruously associates the black satin dress and the heavily made-up eyes of the evil Mediterranean sister with the regular folds of the nun's robe and the gestures of her hands, which recall ancient classical statues. A similar comment could be extended to the photo presented as "Finding his Sweetheart a White Sister," in which Colman holds in his arms a lifeless Gish in her nun's outfit, with the white mantle descending in soft pleats. These images show a marked pictorial intent, almost as if they wanted to distract attention from their transgressive content: Sister Gish in Colman's arms as his "sweetheart"—a nun engaged to a soldier. The program avoids mentioning the titillating story of *The White Sister* and its illustrious literary source, because

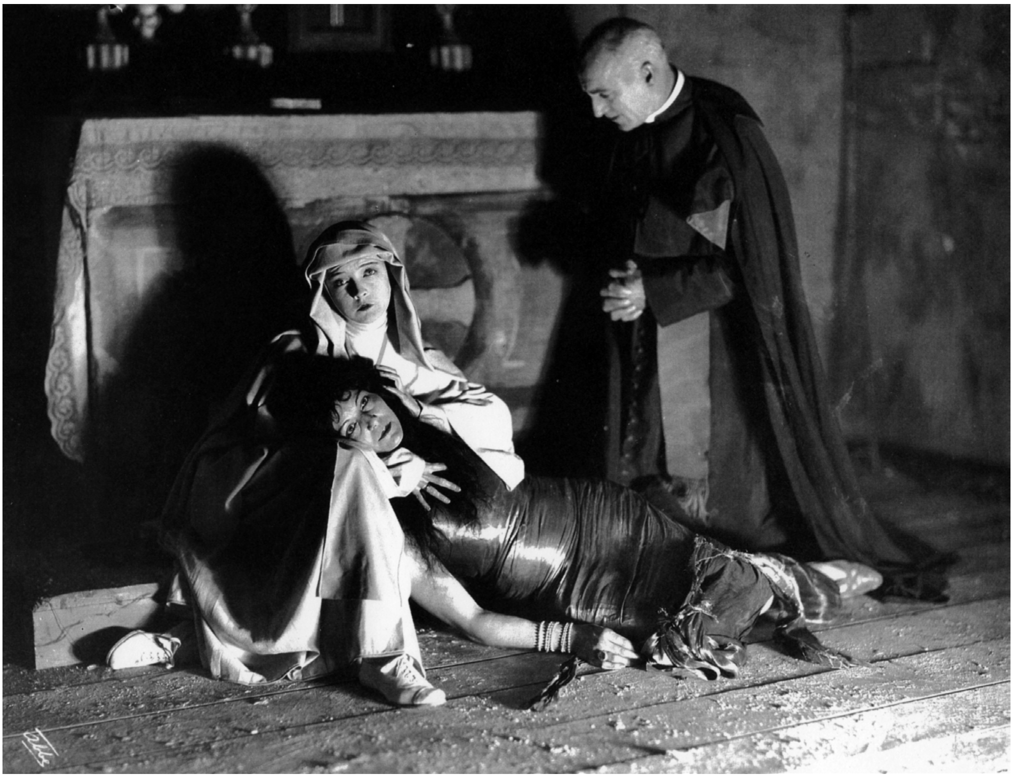


Figure 3.6. A pictorial composition inspired by Italian *pietas* in Henry King's *The White Sister* (1923). (Courtesy of Kevin Brownlow.)

they might remind American audiences of its uncomfortable religious element - Italian Catholicism - and the colonial implications of Colman's uniform.

The second Italian project for Henry King, Lillian Gish, and Ronald Colman was *Romola*, a costume film adapted from the eponymous drama by George Eliot and set in Renaissance Florence. The cast included some actors from *The White Sister*, as well as several members of the Florentine nobility.

The plot is typical of Renaissance costume films: Romola (Lillian Gish), daughter of a blind scholar, marries Tito (William Powell), an ambitious and ambiguous stranger, who, with the help of the adventurer Spini (Frank Puglia), rises to the position of chief magistrate, and enters a mock marriage with Tessa (Dorothy Gish). When Tito condemns Savonarola, the beloved champion of the people, to death, a mob goes after him, and he drowns in the Arno river. Romola takes care of Tessa's baby, and marries Carlo (Ronald Colman), a sculptor who has remained faithful to her.

The film proposes a classical representation of the Italian Renaissance, with abundant artistic-literary citations but, as in the popular literature it adapted, it also depicts the social tensions of the period under the guise of conspiracies. The people and the aristocracy relentlessly weave plots and alliances to contest the government and overturn tyrants, while the ascetic monk Savonarola thunders from the pulpit. The struggle for power, the people against the nobility, suggests the instability of mobs, with clear irritation at the complications of class divisions in the Old Continent and an ambiguous sympathy for the people who want to overthrow the tyrants. However, it would be stretching the point to project antiauthoritarian sentiments onto this conventional narrative.

In terms of décor, the lavish scenes of Renaissance Florence are quite effective, but the only emotionally touching sequence is the one in which the Gish sisters tenderly take care of the little child. King allowed the velvet and damask of costumes and sets to dull the picture and did not exploit to the full the emotional synergy of the Gish sisters, as Griffith did in *Orphans of the Storm* (fig. 3.7). The analogy of the roles might have induced Gish and King, producers of the film, to call (Italian immigrant actor) Frank Puglia, who had been with them in *Orphans* onto the Florentine set to play a much more important role than fellow immigrant performers Ricciardi and Armetta in their Italian experiences. This signals again the potential of Puglia's career in silent cinema, where he was seen as a promising leading man.

Visually, *Romola* is a spectacular film. Like *The White Sister*, which also heavily exploited the Roman aristocracy, this film uses members of the Florentine nobility as extras, as well as consultants and suppliers of elements of the décor (as in the banquet sequence, for example). Class difference is evident in these films, neatly dividing the aristocrats, associated with artistic Italy (but also with the vices of this class) from the easily excited crowds of the lower classes. While recent historiography tends to analyze the representation of Italians in American culture in terms of race, the traditional element of class difference should never be underestimated, considering the contradictory love-hate relationship that "democratic" American culture maintains in relation to both polarities.

The film was shot in a studio in Rifredi near Florence between August 1923 and 1924, with the assistance of an expert in Renaissance culture, the director of the Biblioteca Laurenziana, Guido Biagi, "appreciated consultant for everything regarding costumes and the reconstruction of Florence in the 15th century."[105] In King's words: "We took a studio in Florence; our big sets there covered seventeen acres and the highest building was 274 feet. This was a reproduction of the Duomo and of the Campanile. Robert Haas was again the art director, and I cannot praise too highly the Italian workmen. Nothing was too much trouble. They patiently worked over those sets to make them exact replicas of the fifteen-century architecture. I made some scenes in front of the real Duomo; they matched so well you couldn't tell the difference" (fig. 3.8).[106]

Interviews and records indicate that making costume films in Italy forced American filmmakers to become aware of the history of Italian art and look for experts or study monuments, paintings, and artifacts, so as to make sure that they would not look foolish in the eyes of the world's audiences. In a promotional text entitled "The Making of 'Romola,'" most of the photos illustrate the different crafts used in the production.[107] This promotional document emphasizes the amount of research necessary to ensure the accuracy of historical detail, explaining that the production took more than a year: "One hundred thousand square feet of paving stones were laid. The dome of the famous cathedral of Florence was reproduced on a scale only slightly smaller than the original. . . . Fifteenth century furniture [was] ransacked from the antique shops of Florence. . . . The same

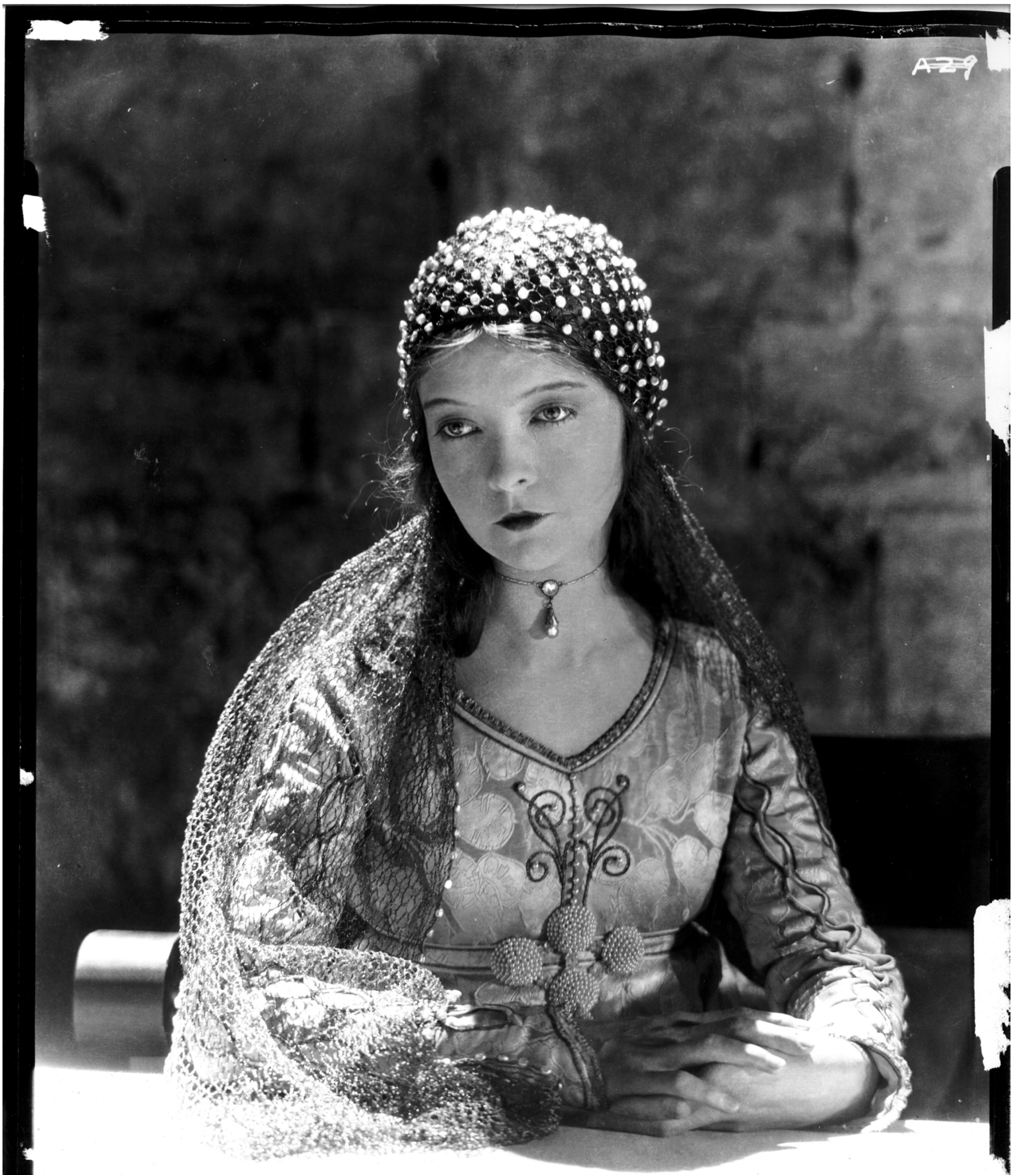


Figure 3.7. Lillian Gish as in a Renaissance portrait in Henry King's *Romola* (1924). (Courtesy of Kevin Brownlow.)

scrupulous care was expended on the costumes used in the picture, practically all of them being designed after paintings by late fifteenth-century masters. Even the jewelry worn was authentic."[108] According to "The Making of *Romola*" the historical realism was entrusted to the Italian workers, as though they were able to grant historicity through their very work: "Hundreds of skilled Italian laborers were employed—men and women who had been born and bred in the atmosphere of the old Italian city whose influence so peculiarly

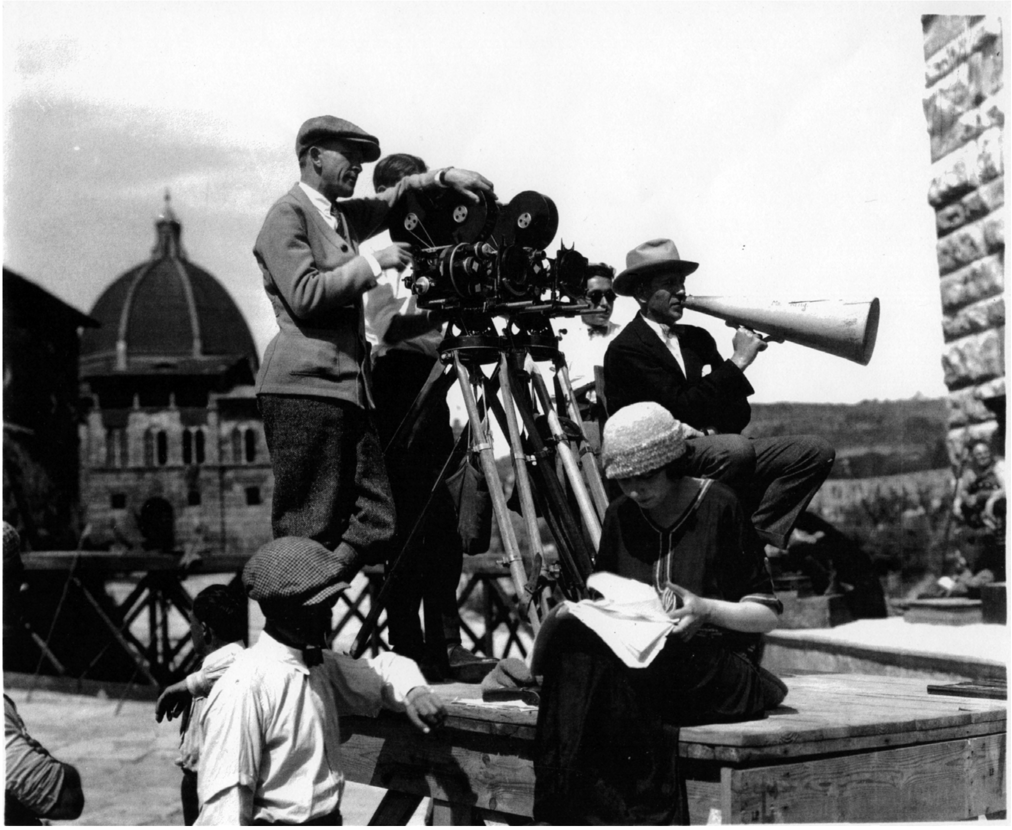


Figure 3.8. Henry King on the set of *Romola* in the Rifredi studios in Florence. (Courtesy of Kevin Brownlow.)

dominates every page in George Eliot's masterpiece. Supervising the workers were skilled specialists who knew even the slightest details concerning the objects that were being turned out." In addition to the director of the Biblioteca of Laurenziana, Tito Neri was an important contributor to the look of the film (as he was later in *Ben Hur*); he built the historical ships utilized in the first part of the film. The construction of ships, the replicas of monuments and the elements of décor were always entrusted to Italians, who often also designed them, given the skill they had gained not only in making historical films but also in religious representations, or popular celebrations such as carnivals, where papier-mâché was the main material used. The ability of the artisans, carpenters, and tailors in making historical representations was a precious resource for filmmakers all over Italy. According to Lillian Gish:

> I can't praise too highly the Italian workmen who carried out in such minute detail the exact setting of the story. . . . I learned why the Italians make such wonderful workmen. They are willing to be "told" and possess an astonishing ambition to do exactly as it should be done. They are loyal to the Italian ideal. They must have said to themselves: "We will show the world the beauty of Italy's handicraft, back there in the Middle Ages when the rest of the world was not so clever." And they did.[109]

Just as narrated by the Taviani brothers in *Good Morning Babilonia* (1987), Griffith too used Tuscan stonemasons to build the sets of *Intolerance*.

Although American sources are rich in the details of these special productions abroad, there seems to be no official documentation on the making of these American pictures in Italy, not even at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The only Italian historical research on these films refers to *Romola* and deals with an important Italian crew member, Giovanni Faraglia.[110] Amateur theater director and "fervid nationalist," Faraglia was also a member of the Fascist party. Metro hired him as an *ispettore alla produzione* (literally, a production inspector), in charge of the Rifredi studios, "in order to solve any problem with fascist unions." This historical essay on Faraglia refers to some publicity stills showing the man with the American stars and some extras—against the background of a fake Florence or ancient ships in Livorno—showing the crew in black shirts and the pennon of the local section of the Fascist Union.

After advertising the gigantic effort that went into making the film spectacular and historically precise, the American publicity material for the film in fact, adds that "(o)ne of the contributing factors to the successful making of 'Romola' was the aid given by the Italian Government and the municipal authorities in the cities and towns where scenes were filmed."[111] Without discussing the complex rapport between Fascist Italy and the United States, taking into account the authorizations necessary in any location shooting, the productions of *Romola* and *The Eternal City* confirm that the regime maintained a positive attitude toward American cinema, as shown by the willingness of the Italian authorities and institutions to collaborate in the production. What is also clear, though unexpected, is the Americans' willingness to interact with the Fascist government and even to become a sounding board for the regime.

The fact that the films produced by Inspiration were distributed by Metro-Goldwyn also confirms that this studio, together with Fox, appears to have attached particular importance to the Italian market. The legendary *Ben Hur* was also a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production.

Ben Hur*: A Heroic Fiasco?*

The making of *Ben Hur* was quite adventurous, full of twists, turns, and catastrophes. The project had the traits of a colossal movie, but gigantism does not predispose to agility. The negotiations for the rights to Lew Wallace's book *Ben Hur* (a worldwide bestseller at the time) were complex and finally concluded by Abraham Erlanger, for the exorbitant sum of one million dollars, after he had already adapted it successfully as a play.[112] In this performance, Messalla was played by the future Western star William S. Hart: *Ben Hur* was indeed an attractive intermedia product.

Samuel Goldwyn secured the rights. At this point, screenwriter and producer June Mathis, fresh off the success of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, enters the scene in search of cultural legitimation for the medium and looking for new creative and productive spaces for herself: it was she who insisted on making the film in Italy.[113] And "Mussolini, in the first flush of his triumphs, gave orders that every assistance be extended to the company."[114] Therefore the project started under the protection of the government, in 1924, as it was addressing the transition to a one-party regime, and thus eager for a strong promotion of the image of Rome abroad—something the project promised to deliver. In fact, director Charles Brabin even "munificently suggested that a reproduction of Jerusalem's Joppa Gate should be built three times as high as the original, so that the mob surrounding the far-off figure of Christ in the scene of his march on the road to the Calvary would be dwarfed by this symbol of Rome."[115]

Since the film implied a very large investment, and the decision to make it abroad was a risky move, the regime's attitude might have been a convincing argument, and thanks to it and to Mathis's authority, the popularity of Italian historical epics, and the positive results for *Nero*, *The Shepherd King*, and Goldwyn's own *The Eternal City*, shooting in Italy was approved (fig. 3.9). June Mathis chose Charles Brabin as director, George Walsh (Raoul's brother) as the leading man, Francis X Bushman for the role of Messalla, and the almost unknown Carmel Myers as Iras. For the role of Ben Hur, the first choice would have been Rudolph Valentino, but he had been "suspended" over contractual disagreements. For months, fan magazines had been suggesting strings of names for the various roles, and the time taken over casting became legendary. Rex Ingram had been supposed to direct, and bitterly resented being supplanted by Brabin, who was not a first-rank director and had no experience within the genre. An illogical, almost unreasonable, vein runs throughout the whole undertaking, contradicting the expectations that the rise of the studio system would encourage rationalization. Indeed, the construction of the sets in Rome and the first shooting did not progress with the desired efficiency. A further and perhaps decisive complication was the merger between Sam Goldwyn and Louis B. Mayer which gave birth to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and Goldwyn's immediate separation from the enterprise, leaving only the G of the logo to the new company, and the ambitious project of *Ben Hur*.

Mayer, together with Irving Thalberg and Harry Rapf, opted for a fresh start. Director Fred Niblo substituted Brabin, and Ramon Novarro took the place of Walsh (who had not been filmed yet).[116] In a typical Hollywood conspiracy, the operation was conducted in secret: Niblo—together with his wife, Enid Bennett, screenwriters Bess Meredyth and Carey Wilson, Novarro, and MGM's executives Robert Rubin and Marcus Loew—boarded the *Leviathan* for Europe without warning the crew in Italy. By the time George Walsh learned of his replacement, Novarro was already in Rome.

While the making of *Ben Hur* started again almost from scratch, June Mathis returned to the United States, together with Italian cameraman Silvano Balboni, whom she had just married. Ivan St. John devoted an article in the popular fan magazine *Photoplay*, describing the relationship between "super-woman" Mathis, one of the most powerful persons in the American film industry of the time, and the "young and handsome Italian director-cinematographer."[117] The couple had just finished *The Masked Woman* (1927), directed by Balboni, when June Mathis died unexpectedly and Balboni returned to Italy: *Ben Hur* does seem to have been under something of a curse.

In the summer of 1924, the Italian company Cines enlarged its studios in Rome, in order to host the shooting of this "new" *Ben Hur*, showing a cooperative attitude toward

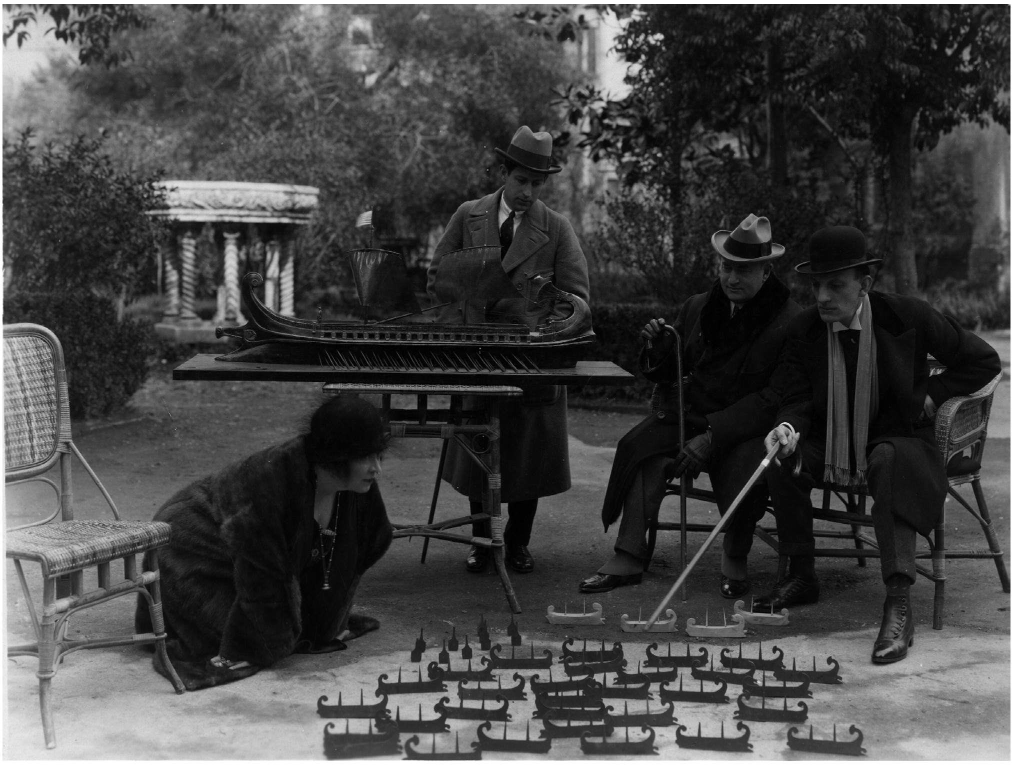


Figure 3.9. June Mathis examines the models of the fleet for *Ben Hur*. The American-designed ships sank as soon as they set sail. The Tito Neri shipyard in Livorno had to repair the whole fleet in twelve days. (Courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.)

American film productions in Italy, at a time when national production had almost ceased. But things continued to go wrong. In August 1924, the assassination of Socialist leader Giacomo Matteotti, instigated by the regime, provoked a general strike, in which the film workers also took part. As a reaction, the Blackshirts organized a *spedizione punitiva* (punitive expedition) with guns and batons against the workers on the set of *Ben Hur*. Order was reestablished the next day, on condition that only members of Fascist Union could resume work.[118] These events allowed the Americans to continue blaming the Italian authorities and workers for the delays in production, studiously ignoring the political violence openly exercised by the Fascists, with whom they continued to carry on collaborating, even inviting Il Duce on the set, but he declined.[119] In an interview for the *Motion Picture Director* in January 1926, Niblo, unwilling (or culpably unable) to recognize the political context of the events, argued: “But these difficulties were wholly attributable to the making of a picture of the magnitude of *Ben Hur* rather than the fact that we were making it in Italy.” He added that the Italian institutions had shown great willingness to collaborate, with the national railways even fitting special tracks to transport materials and people onto the gigantic set, ten miles out of Rome—another confirmation of the positive attitudes of both the regime and the film industry with respect to this colossal enterprise, which glorified imperial Rome through a film evidently inspired by Italian historical epics.

However, the production did not progress. Louis B. Mayer left California for Italy with his family. He arrived on the set when Niblo was planning to shoot the spectacular naval battle at Anzio (near Rome), but, according to art director Arnold Gillespie, he had "decided to add a flagship to the fleet."[120] Gillespie's "remembrances" offer anecdotes as well as important details about the production of this famous film. He also documents the relationships between professionals of different nationalities, which becomes the main thread of the narrative in this account.

In order to build the flagship, the studio selected Tito Neri's facilities in Livorno because they had done "a great job" in the production of *Romola*. However, according to Gillespie, "upon my arrival in Livorno, I found our entire fleet in the water just off the Neri boat works, resting serenely on the bottom." In fact, as soon as the American-designed galleys had set sail for Tuscany, they sank.[121] Italian Camillo Mastrocinque redesigned the fleet.[122] Therefore Neri's shipyard had to construct both the sunk fleet and a large new flagship in twelve days. Doubling the number of workers, hiring all the available men in Livorno, who toiled twenty-four hours a day, Neri succeeded. "It took us, and four hundred opera-singing, non–clock watching, wonderful Italian workers, fourteen days!" Thus, it was quite unfair to blame the inefficiency of production on the Italian workers, at least not on the Tuscans. When the "Roman contingent," led by Niblo, arrived in Livorno "our proud Fleet, the new Flagship and every last muddy-keeled Anzio-fabricated galley, was stretched pretty majestically across the Mediterranean, this time on top of the water." Gillespie continues: "An absolutely remarkable accomplishment for which Tito and his men . . . deserve 98% of the credit."

Of the four hundred extras, hired for the battle with the Macedonian pirates, he mentions that those playing the Romans were Fascists and those playing the pirates were anti-Fascists, a detail the Americans were unaware of. The extras received an additional one hundred lire because they had to jump from the burning galleys and swim in the open sea and, in the case of the Roman soldiers, wearing their armor too.

During the shooting of the naval battle, while the galleys were on fire, the extras, the Fascist Romans and anti-Fascist pirates, fought with authentic ferocity on the deck of the ship, until the fire created mass panic as it raged out of control (fig. 3.10).[123] Pirates and Romans plunged into the sea, but several of them couldn't swim and refused to jump into the water; others desperately tried to stay afloat dog-paddle fashion and moved away from the ship, looking for a handhold. The images on the film, even though in long shot, together with Gillespie's words, confirm the drama of the moment. "It was when I arrived ashore that I discovered that the entire company, sensing the possibility of loss of life, had headed pell-mell for Rome," afraid of being arrested for the manslaughter of the drowned extras. While "the MGM's Ben Hur contingent" fled headlong to Rome, Gillespie and the man in charge of the wardrobe, Adolph Sidel, remained in Livorno, to "check in all costumes and returning to their owners their rightful clothes and belongings." But "late on this memorable evening there were still several unclaimed and unaccounted for civilian outfits left over and various costumes which had not been turned back to wardrobe." There are various endings to this anecdote: Gillespie argues, "Sidel burned the unclaimed apparel . . . loaded a rowboat with chains and weights and proceeded silently from Tito's boat-works . . . [and] headed for the spot where the galley had burned and sunk. His plan

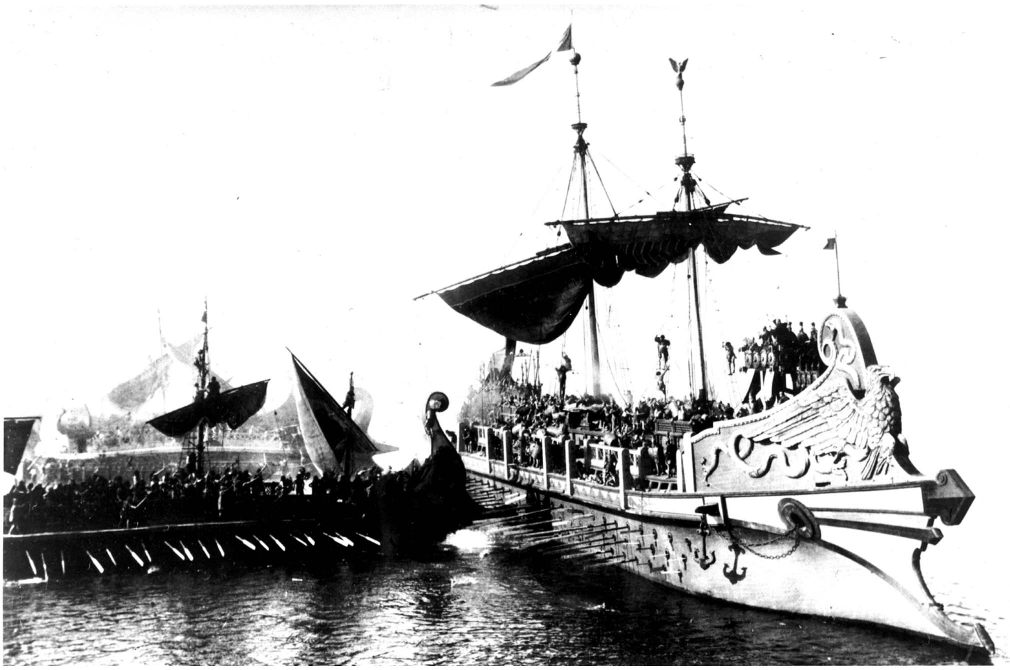


Figure 3.10. In the naval battle of *Ben Hur*, the pirates (played by anti-Fascist extras) fought against the (Fascist) Romans. An undefined number of extras died during the filming of the fire onboard. (Courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.)

was to destroy, or rather 'sink' the evidence, if any." Later Sidel claimed that he had not found any floating corpses. This horrific scene sheds new light on the making of the film, but Gillespie offers a happy ending: some missing extras reappeared the next morning, still in their pirate outfits, having been rescued by fishermen. Other witnesses claim that there were several dead extras, but MGM was able to cover up everything. Cynically, the American production company did not worry about what happened to the poor Italians who, for a fistful of lire, had sworn that they could swim. If the life of an Italian extra, despite the human contact that must have arisen through working side by side, was so insignificant, the episode reveals a disturbing degree of contempt or detachment toward Italians among the American crew.

The shooting of the chariot race was also marked by a string of tragic incidents: at least one extra died and several horses had to be shot. And yet the king and queen of Italy did not disdain to pay a visit to the set at the Circus Maximus for this scene. Anxious to meet authentic royalty, the MGM contingent waited, lined up in orderly fashion, for hours. But the Italian royal family limited the visit to a parade in their car, without stopping for official introductions or ceremonies of any sort, disappointing the Hollywood crowd: an ironic mismatch between blue-blood royalty and the new rulers of the collective imaginary. In any case, both the regime and the monarchy, however careful not to openly commit themselves, supported or legitimized these American productions in Italy.

According to Gillespie, when winter came and the hours of light in which it was possible to shoot decreased, the Americans returned home. In January 1925, the Roman sets of *Ben Hur* were demolished, leaving only the reconstruction of the Circus Maximus standing, in case they returned in spring to finish shooting the crucial sequence. Producer Irving Thalberg was totally opposed to the idea of resuming shooting in Italy, even though he quite unexpectedly authorized ongoing editing in Rome, with the contribution of two Italian women film editors, Irene Coletta and Renata Bernabei.[124] The set of the Circus Maximus was rebuilt in Culver City and the chariot race—partially or entirely—shot there.

It took a year to edit the film; meanwhile, in the United States, expectations had risen to fever pitch. The exhibitors went wild, offering MGM fabulous contracts and prestigious theaters. The premiere of *Ben Hur* was an enormous box office success; nevertheless, the studio never managed to recuperate the full expense of the film, which cost four million dollars to make.

The story of the Italian shooting of *Ben Hur* is redolent of a disaster movie. Several interviews or "memoires" of the American participants in the epic enterprise exculpate the Italians by demonstrating respect for the technical abilities of workmen and figures such as Tito Neri and offering a positive image of the Italian as artisan-artist. The promotional materials listed in great detail, and with multiple spreads of illustrations, the iconographic and pictorial sources utilized to design the costumes and the décor. The publicity stressed "Months of Research Made by Noted Archaeologists to Secure Realism" in order to ensure the historical verisimilitude of every detail "of Roman, Greek, Jewish, and Egyptian culture in relation to costumes, mannerisms, religion, education, daily life, sport." The scenes of the "Return from Calvary, the Crucifixion, the Nativity Cave, that of the bearing of the cross through the streets of Jerusalem . . . have been faithfully reproduced from the famous paintings dealing with these subjects," and the *Last Supper* by Leonardo had been studied so as to reproduce it perfectly.[125]

Brownlow tells an anecdote that reveals the contradictions in the cultural attitudes of the MGM contingent between the "touristic-aesthetic" ideal of Italy on the one hand and the "alien-intruder" one (as Broadhead would define them) on the other. In Livorno—while digging a dock to get closer shots of the pirates' assault on the flagship—"the construction crew breached some ancient catacombs. 'Oh, my God!' cried the frantic production manager. 'If Mussolini ever hears about this . . . if the museum people ever hear . . . we're done for.' The catacombs had to be waterproofed. This meant delay, and further unbudgeted expense. But the company discovered to their delight that the whole area was rich in Roman remains. They were soon energetically digging up archaeological rarities."[126] A very special souvenir of the making of the film, tricking the Italian "museum people" who had assisted them so generously with their expertise. Italy was a territory to explore and exploit, Italians an inferior race to be tricked in order to avoid being tricked by them. As Broadhead argued, the rampant cultural aspirations of those Americans with archaeological-artistic tastes had the same economic foundations as their dislike for Italians from the lower strata of society.[127]

And yet Americans, in the prolonged "making" of the film, also enjoyed less exploitative Italian experiences. In terms of professional interactions, the production of *Ben Hur* proposed other characters as links in the invisible chain that connects American production companies to Italian cinema. Among them was Fritz Curioni, who had also assisted in the production of Brenon's films at the UCI and, in this case, worked as a connection between Cines and MGM,[128] supervising, in 1924, the extension of the Italian studios and later becoming the MGM manager in Italy. Others include cinematographer Balboni, who married June Mathis and moved to Hollywood for a few years, and Tito Neri, Camillo Mastrocinque, the Italian editors, and the thousands of extras.

The interaction between the Italians and Americans during the making of these films has been narrated in a wide variety of ways. Referring to the traditional historiography of Italian cinema, Victoria de Grazia attributed a negative impact to the production of *Ben Hur*: "Given that the *troupe* monopolized the studios and employed hundreds of workers and extras at inflated salaries, blocking all other productions, when it went back to Hollywood. . . . [I]t left the Italian film industry shattered."[129] But maybe it was already "shattered" thanks to its own problems. On the other hand, the Italian newspaper in New York, *Il Progresso Italiano*, proudly advertised the film as an Italian American production, "shot in Rome, Livorno, and Los Angeles."[130]

The game of "passing the buck" between Italians and Americans for the incidents during production and Hollywood's epic self-representation make it difficult to really assess the truth of the matter. However, the claims that very little of the filming in Italy remains in the actual film are false: the naval battle is indeed the sequence shot in Livorno, with its dramatic connotations, and the spectacular crowd scenes at the Joppa Gate are Italian. In addition, the prolonged editing in Italy means that there might be other material that was used in the final print.

While the later experience of *Quo Vadis?* in the cold war era and in the glorious days of Hollywood on the Tiber showed complete consonance between Italian and American filmic and political institutions, it is the dissonances that prevail in the case of *Ben Hur*, mostly because of the delays and the problems associated with the filming in Italy (which were a fabrication of fan magazines) and consequently of the American film industry itself, and specifically that part of it that did not appreciate such lavish spending on filmmaking abroad. The irrational organization of the shooting, the arrogant attitudes of the American crew, and the Italian political turmoil did the rest, somewhat obscuring the involvement of the regime and even the monarchy in support of the project.

However, because of the emphasis that the American press laid on the misadventures besetting the production of *Ben Hur*, Hollywood's major studios would no longer consider shooting films in Italy.

Mare Nostrum*: A Last View of the Mediterranean*

Directed by Rex Ingram and distributed by Metro, *Mare Nostrum* (1926), was an independent (rather than a major studio) production, and location shooting in Italy was limited to a segment of the film.

At the height of his career, Ingram left Hollywood in order to make films on the Old Continent, to "establish a new Hollywood in Europe."[131] It was therefore a question not only of the grandiose American aspiration to build its "irresistible empire" but a natural cultural continuity of American intellectuals and artists visiting Europe and sharing its culture, and making Hollywood more "European," sophisticated, and intellectually more stimulating. While the Victorine Studios in Nice were under reconstruction, Ingram shot some sequences of *Mare Nostrum* in Campania. The film was an adaptation of a novel by Blasco Ibáñez, author of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (also filmed by Ingram). Perhaps his decision to shoot in Italy was partly in retaliation for being excluded from the making of *Ben Hur* by his "friend" June Mathis.

The Italian scenes exploited the archaeological sites of Naples, Pompeii, and Paestum, but the film was set in modern times; it was a story of espionage against the background of World War I, thus falling somewhere between an action picture and a study in philosophical mysticism, a combination typical of Ibáñez (fig. 3.11). Ingram's wife Alice Terry, coprotagonist of *Four Horsemen*, played Freya, a German spy, while Antonio Moreno (another disillusioned candidate for the role of Ben Hur) played captain Ulysses Ferragaut. The two meet at the ruins of Pompeii and fall in love, but family duties (the captain is married and has a son) as well as the war divide them. As in *Four Horsemen*, the story does not end happily.

References to classical culture abound in the archeological perambulations, in the choice of names for the characters (Ulysses) and in the metaphorical images of Freya as Amphi-

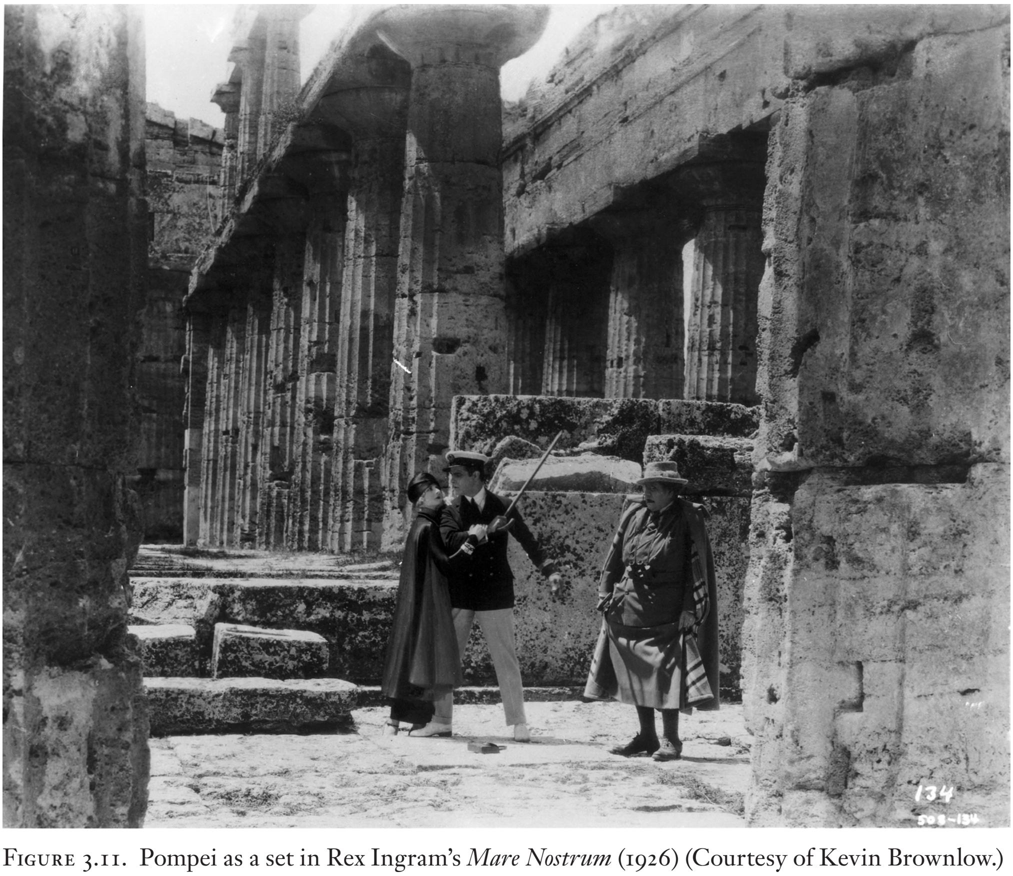


FIGURE 3.11. Pompei as a set in Rex Ingram's *Mare Nostrum* (1926) (Courtesy of Kevin Brownlow.)

trite. "Italian landscape with ancient ruins" is the subject of a genre of paintings familiar world over, but among these films, *Mare Nostrum* is the only one to use these visuals so emphatically, even though Ingram associates their archaeological symbolism with a metaphorical and spiritualist approach.

As in *The White Sister* and *Eternal City* (the other silent films set in modern times), the emphasis on "the war" moved the film toward a militaristic and dour heroism, as if the strong Italian nationalist tensions had wormed their way into these American productions. What makes this film unique is the contradictory way in which it combines the archaeology of the Grand Tour with the dramatic present, creating a tension between the destructive forces of nationalism and a shared past, that of Graeco-Roman culture, revealed at the start of the film, which opens with a title hailing the Mediterranean as the nucleus of Western civilization ("Upon its bosom mankind spread the first sail, from its depths the sea-gods were born").

The film took fifteen months to shoot and included work in France, Italy, and, with a second unit, Spain. Underwater sequences, the use of real submarines, and the different locations meant a long production schedule and a lengthy editing process. The sequence at the Naples Aquarium is memorable in itself: Freya and Ulysses talk behind a tank containing a gigantic octopus in close up—a disturbing animal association characteristic of Ingram's style, which appears also in *The Lady from Shanghai* (Orson Welles, 1947)—a man of the sea and a dangerous lady, in this case a diva film in disguise (fig. 3.12).

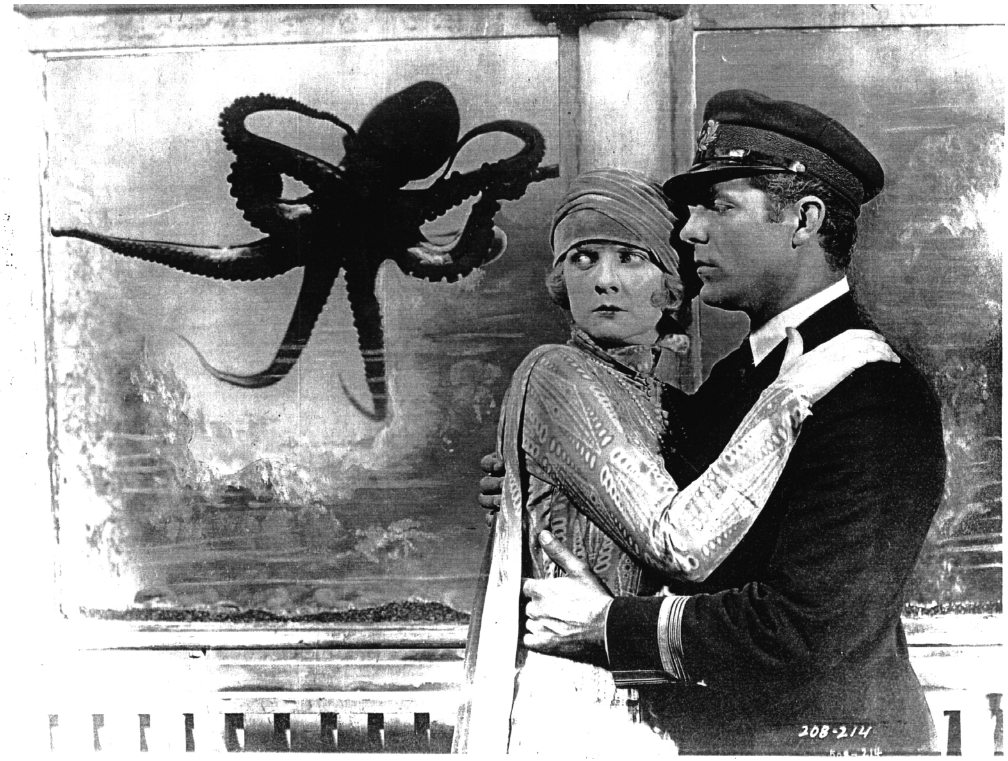


Figure 3.12. Alice Terry and Antonio Moreno in an animal allegory typical of Ingram's *Mare Nostrum*. (Courtesy of Kevin Brownlow.)

The set of *Mare Nostrum* encouraged other professional contacts that went beyond the strict boundaries of time and geography inherent in the making of the film. While he was recuperating some filmmaking equipment, abandoned in Rome by his American colleagues after the shooting of *Ben Hur*, Ingram met the Italian technician Amleto Negri, and had him join his company in Nice. From then on Negri worked regularly with Ingram.[132]

A significant number of American silent films were made in Italy, but the majority were not historical films or pictures requiring Italian settings. The reasons conventionally offered to explain this process were both economic (cheap labor) and cultural (prestige), but they reveal an unexpectedly confused project on the part of Hollywood, starting with their sources. In fact, the films were adaptations of novels by Hall Caine, Rider Haggard, Marion Crawford, George Eliot, Lew Wallace, and Blasco Ibáñez, not all of them set in Italy, and they were not all exactly high literature. These films however allowed for the presentation of sites of natural and artistic value as a background to somewhat shocking situations; for example, the orphan David of *Eternal City*, who discovers he is the son of the pope, or Sister Angela who learns too late that her fiancé is still alive, or Tito's bigamy in *Romola* and adultery and betrayal in *Mare Nostrum*. These themes and narratives appear to be more typical of Italian and European dramas of the day and the decadent D'Annunzian style of the diva film, rather than Hollywood's silent cinema of the early 1920s. However, the use of open air shooting and contact with the Italian landscape make their style less claustrophobic than the contemporary Italian diva dramas.

As noted in several reviews, the main asset of these films shot in Italy was the added value of the pictorial and cultural resonances of the landscape. Totally filmic and immediately recognizable, since the iconography of the Italian landscape is deeply embedded within the visual culture of the Western world, the Italian background alone was enough to trigger the idea of Italy, the *bel paese* of opera, stage, and cinema. And yet the selection of the narrative materials often brought them up against censorship and major compromises and restricted the potential for distribution in Italy. Controversial aspects were usually glossed over in boisterous official promotion, and the hand of the censors was only mentioned in later *memoires* and interviews. The choice of these literary sources indicates a contradictory management perspective (especially in reference to the two *Eternal City* productions, controversial in any Catholic or democratic country), a superficial knowledge of the history of Italy, and most of all of the state of the peninsula at the time. These films were imbued with commonplaces and prejudices—typical of the mentality of those who wrote or chose these texts—and immersed in Victorian WASP culture. Francis Marion Crawford,[133] whose novels were adapted in *Sant'Ilario* and *The White Sister*, was no Henry James. And although both authors actually lived in Italy, they maintained an emotional detachment, to put it mildly, toward their Italian characters that does not leave space for identification, insisting instead on an image of an inept aristocracy and an unruly people. Indeed, these American film experiences in "the cradle of the arts" bear the marks of a deep-seated as well as contradictory cultural anti-Italianism, which echoed its anti-immigration policies.

Most of the American film people reached Italy with a smattering of knowledge of centuries-old literature, art, and theater, but with little curiosity about—and even less ability to "see"—the real country that lay before them, a country that was undergoing dramatic changes at the time when they arrived, after World War I. Journalist Herbert Howe and cinematographer Arthur Miller found themselves face to face with the social turmoil and the confused situation of the country and even welcomed the advent of Fascism with its promise of "order." In a letter to Edmund Wilson, in June 1921, F. Scott Fitzgerald defined Italians as "philistine, anti-socialist, provincial and racially snobbish."[134] He quite consciously adhered to the widely shared "alien-intruder" prejudice, as Broadhead would define it: "The negroid streak creeps northward to defile the Nordic races. Italians already have the souls of blackamoors. Raise the bars of immigration and permit only Scandinavians, Teutons, Anglo-Saxons and Celts to enter." The modern dramas represented a decadent Italy, soaked in the culture stigmatized by Fitzgerald, inhabited by a useless aristocracy as dangerously weak and antidemocratic as the monarchy, which made its regal appearance on the sets of these pictures but never entered into contact with these new "barbarians," demonstrating a disdain which equaled that of the foreign filmmakers toward the host country.

If this cultural strategy appears flawed, the industrial considerations of the cheap cost of spectacular filmmaking in Italy would prevail, especially in relation to the use of crowds of extras. George Kleine had been the first to insist on the number of crowds as a factor in the success of Italian historical epics. Thus, *Ben Hur* boasted of having used 250,000 extras; if one adds these to the crowds in the arenas of *Nero* and *The Shepherd King*, to the Fascists and the Bolsheviks of both *Eternal Cities*, and to the people of Florence, an enormous number of Italians did "work" in American films. However, American filmmakers mainly used crowds to represent infuriated mobs, riots, and social upheaval: in Jewish Jerusalem against the Roman invaders, in ancient Rome, when the people storm Nero's palace, in the Renaissance against the tyrant Tito and in Rome after unification or during the rise of Fascism, as in *Eternal City*. These images reflected profound ambiguities within the American cinema, where revolutionary movements were represented as threatening crowds (as with the Red Mob in *The Eternal City*), unless they overthrew unjust social orders (as in the case of *Romola*). However, historical pictures such as *Romola* or *Ben Hur* ended up narrating a contemporary turbulent Italy more accurately than the films set in modern Italy did.

American filmmakers in Italy might have learnt how to manage crowds from Mussolini himself, who dominated them with his harangues from the balcony of Palazzo Venezia or in the "choreographed" March on Rome. But the crowds of Italian extras in these films were not yet trained in the geometric military exercises that Mussolini was to copy from Nazism in the 1930s. And the "Italian extras" in these films were no neutral masses either; they were not simply bodies loaned to Hollywood. They were the real Socialist strikers of the first *Eternal City*, the anti-Fascists playing *Ben Hur*'s pirates in Livorno (the city where the Italian Communist Party was founded in 1921); they were the workers holding a Fascist Party card on the Roman sets of *Ben Hur*. They were the real Blackshirts in the Colosseum in the second adaptation of *The Eternal City*, proud of their fez hats and batons. But their political identity was never discussed: Italian social upheaval was seen as endemic and not as a historical or contingent event. It was desirable to portray monumental history; the past dusted off, straight out of a museum, but what was really happening in the country—history in the making—was ignored, misunderstood, and misrepresented, while Fascism, if not directly favored, was tacitly accepted.

The ghosts of papal Rome too inhabited some of these American silent pictures, at times within a tension between religion (and the Vatican) and politics (Nationalism, Fascism, Socialism) that erased any spiritual value in Catholicism. Had Borzage shot *Street Angel* in the real Naples (rather than in Hollywood), given his great sensitivity to the spiritual world of his characters, there would have been at least this exception. Instead, any sense of spirituality was totally lacking in these productions, even when they were supposed to address this theme, as in the case of *The White Sister* or *Ben Hur*, whose full title read "a tale of the Christ." Religion was transformed into conventional pictorial iconography, whose original sources were emphasized in the promotional materials.

In advertising and memoires, one of the reasons for shooting these films in Italy was the quality of the cheap labor, available in Italy, and necessary for the costumes and décor, for the construction of gigantic historical monuments, or shipbuilding in Livorno. These activities "made in Italy" were appreciated because of the value of the Italian craftsmanship and artisanal skills. Furthermore, they helped dispel doubts about historical authenticity, which was not a feature typical of Hollywood cinema, as the use of the Trevi fountain in films set in ancient Rome revealed. Promotional materials bragged: "Hundreds of skilled Italian laborers were employed—men and women who had been born and bred in the atmosphere of the old Italian city,"[135] presenting the qualities of Italian workmen, tailors, carpenters, and stonemasons, not as the result of hard labor or technical abilities, but as a sort of "natural gift" of history, as if these workers had not spent years learning their art and long hours trying to satisfy the (at times absurd) requests of American filmmakers.

And this labor was paid for in hard cash: in the end, these "low costs" end up amounting to an incredibly high sum. In financial terms, they would hardly justify the making of *Ben Hur* in Rome, the expensive construction of the sets for *Romola*, or the historical pictures produced by Fox. However, the promotional materials always praised the producers' smart choice of using Italian artisans, implicitly recognizing that they were the authoritative cultural legitimizers of this patrimony. While publicity could not but exalt the costs and advantages (landscape, décor, extras and workmen) if it were not to cast doubt upon the wisdom of location shooting, some verbal elements in reviews and "memoires" reveal reactions to the actual experience of making these films in Italy, at times appraising certain aspects, and on other occasions, imbued with prejudice. Even if the Americans appreciated the Italians as extras or as supporting actors, with the exception of Nerio Bernardi and Guido Trento in Edwards's historical films, no Italian was given a leading role. Instead, the American studios called on William Ricciardi, Henry Armetta, and Frank Puglia, who were already known in the United States and who could fit in with the American cast more efficiently. Obviously, there was also a problem of language: American directors did not speak Italian and the Italian actors did not speak English, which made it more difficult to direct the more intimate or dramatic scenes. Whatever the case, these films engaged Italian actors only in the background. In the end, the promotional materials spoke the truth—the production value of these pictures lay in presenting American stars (or at least popular actors) in a foreign location. Italy, with its cultural prestige, was a good brand to offer to consumers.

In making these films, the interaction between Italians and Americans was often marked by reciprocal misunderstandings and prejudice, nonetheless reciprocal influences and professional exchanges were not lacking. These films had a direct impact on the life of actors such as Sandro Salvini or Guido Trento, who continued working with Americans, and this collaboration gave Puglia an opportunity to return home. They also impacted on the lives of technical craftsmen such as Amato, Curioni, Luporini, and Balboni, who went to Hollywood or continued working for American studios, and all the unnamed people who may have gone to the United States after this experience, even if their filmographies make no explicit mention of this aspect. These films also had an impact on the Italian workmen, technicians, and artisans whom they brought into contact with Hollywood filmmakers. It is a hidden history, which can be reconstructed in the imagination but not always confirmed by documentation. It is the history of an interaction that, for complex sociocultural and political reasons, has not been told on either side of the ocean. The silence of possible Italian sources (such as film magazines or historical accounts) regarding these productions is revealing, marked as it is by a subtle anti-American prejudice in reaction to the "invasion" by Hollywood, which behaved like all the other foreign invaders who have pillaged Italy for centuries. The Italian response was cultural resistance on the one hand and the gates flung open to the victor on the other.

The attitude of the Italian film industry is apparently negative, with the exception of the UCI, somewhat ironically, considering that it was set up to coordinate (and save) Italian cinema. Cines, for instance, was not involved in the first adaptation of *The Eternal City*, but later it rented its studios (and personnel) for the making of *Ben Hur*. Behind the scenes, however, "collaborationist" producers started an open-door policy toward American cinema, while Italian theater owners were always more than satisfied with the profitable presentation of Hollywood films.

Neither one of the two cinemas admitted to being in competition with the other, yet beneath the arrogant posturing ran the fear that their competitor might be better equipped or know something they did not know. As Richard Abel argued, American silent cinema learned to articulate its own national identity through constant comparison and confrontation with foreign film experiences, from which it acquired personnel and characteristics, absorbing them in order to bring them to its own screens, adapting them to American cinema and yet appreciating the quality of their difference.[136] Italian cinema, on the other hand, nurtured an ambiguous relationship with Hollywood that, at the time, had overtaken it in both domestic and international markets, and, since 1918, had imposed quotas on the entry of foreign films into the United States.

The presence of these international sets did not affect the Italian film industry per se, perhaps because of the historical and political context: serious social turmoil and bad economic conditions were not the best context to resume film production after World War I, especially when the producers were not modern industrialists but aristocratic amateurs, faced with a serious attack on their hegemony. Italian producers took a long time to realize, if they ever did, that they had been left behind by the film history, mostly because of their production methods. Therefore, either because of the dominant Fascist-nationalist cultural values of the time or some vestige of Italian pride in film production, the American sets in Italy were presented as a fortunate experience the Americans had been graciously offered: Americans were treated more as unrefined apprentices than potentially dangerous competitors.

FOUR

American Cinema in Italian: The Formation of Italian American Culture

> "The radio was like a religion," Sinatra remembered. "They were even shaped like cathedrals."
>
> —PETE HAMILL, *Why Sinatra Matters*[1]

> The decade of the Thirties was a most dramatic era of sound and sight. It is impossible to recall the period without recourse to special sounds: the "talkies," the machine-gun precision of the dancing feet in Busby Berkeley's musical extravaganzas, the "Big Bands," the voices of Amos and Andy, to say nothing of the magic of Franklin Roosevelt's Fireside Addresses.
>
> —WARREN SUSMAN, *Culture as History*[2]

The introduction of sound created a linguistic Babel and strong tensions between concepts of nationality, mass culture, and entertainment that were complicated by the social disorder provoked by the Great Depression.

In the transatlantic worlds, the relationships between politics, mass media, and economics intensified, provoking a wave of mutations in the habits of audiences and media production strategies, problematizing language and national identities in a delicate phase that lead to the inception of new orders, the New Deal and Nazi Fascism. Changes came from above (politics, capitalist reorganization, and control of the media) and from below with new forms of ethnic media production, especially in radio and film, as found in Little Italy.

Historian Warren Susman describes the era as a choreography of sounds (see epigraph), accompanied, one might add, by Italian voices and music, including the thundering voice of Mussolini in the squares, the hysterical screams on Wall Street in 1929 mixed with the enthralling *Solo per te*, *Lucia* from *La canzone dell'amore*,[3] and the notes of *Santa Lucia Luntana*, the nostalgic Neapolitan melody of emigration which fades into a Charleston in the incipit of the homonymous film produced in New York, or *Lullaby of Broadway*, one of the many compositions by Harry Warren-Salvatore Guaragna for the Warners backstage musicals. All this singing was an attempt to exorcize the fears of increasingly aggressive politics and social disorder, and the confusion created by the linguistic Babel wrought by the introduction of sound.

In the transatlantic worlds, the relationships between politics, mass media, and economics intensified, provoking a wave of mutations in the habits of audiences and media production strategies, problematizing language and national identities in a delicate phase that lead to the inception of new orders: the New Deal and Nazi-Fascism. Changes came from above (politics, capitalist reorganization and control of the media) and from below, with new forms of ethnic media production, especially in radio and film, as found in Little Italy.

The years between 1930 and 1933 represent a period of special significance in the history of both American and Italian cinema.

The Great Depression brought with it a deep crisis in sociocultural life. In the early 1930s, old and new genres addressed social issues, questions of gender and even class conflict with a directness never to be replicated in Hollywood, rousing the preoccupations of the self-righteous. Whereas during the silent cinema era objectionable content could be easily handled with intertitles or by cutting a few frames, in the sound era these types of changes would have been costly if not impossible to make. Thus, the advent of sound accelerated the process toward the drafting of self-censorship regulations, the Hays Code. Sound technology not only complicated the economic, aesthetic, and structural relations within the mass media system but also relations with the financial world, which supported the film industry during the Depression and financed the technological transition to sound and the expansion in theatrical exhibition. In fact, in 1932, Hollywood offered a splendid banquet in order to thank Attilio Giannini from the Bank of America.[4] He was a member of the administration of several film companies and when the Legion of Decency threatened the industry with censorship and boycotts of Hollywood films, he had become an authoritative spokesman for the industry.[5]

Forced to reflect on its ideological foundations the film industry adopted the Hays Code, a set of rules regarding film content, promulgated through its trade organization, the Motion Picture Producers Distribtors of America (MPPDA). The period also witnessed the consolidation of the studio system and the establishment of the monopoly of the majors—all interdependent factors.[6] Although the prevalent interpretation of the Classical Hollywood Cinema mystifies its identification as a national cinema,[7] the pre-Code period calls attention to the relationship American cinema entertains with the national historical context.

Since American cinema had absolute primacy on the foreign markets because it was the first (and, for a long period, the only) one to offer the novelty of synchronized sound, it was forced to define its self-censorship criteria on the basis of ethnic and national issues too. Indeed, a sizeable part of the activities of the Hays Office involved reacting to complaints or monitoring comments from abroad, especially from Italy.[8]

The early 1930s marked a key period in the history of Italian cinema and media in general. The Fascist regime refined its use of communications with an increased interest in "Italians abroad."[9] Fascism tried to impose a unitary nationalist culture in the "colonies," which included the immigrant community in the United States—through Italian radio and newspapers and the work of the Dante Alighieri Society.[10] The regime did not primarily attempt to fascistize the community; indeed, according to Carnevale, "Mussolini disbanded the American *fasci* and instead adopted a course of 'cultural diplomacy' that relied on promoting the Italian language and culture among the second generation."[11] This linguistic education also targeted first-generation immigrants, who were often illiterate. In the case of Italians, however, *illiterate* did not necessarily mean ignorant of Italian high culture: even Italian peasants would sing opera, recite Dante by heart, and were familiar with the most famous Italian artists.

In short, in the early 1930s, the Italian immigrant community in the United States was under pressure from two sides: Italianization and Americanization which led to the formation of an Italian American culture; and Fascism and the New Deal which produced "cultural nostalgia" and conviction and support, respectively.[12] According to Stefano Luconi, "Italian Americans were a pivotal component of the New Deal coalition of voters from diverse ethnic minorities," and they became more aware of their role as citizen consumers. They especially participated in, and benefited from, federal government provisions on home ownership and loans to move out of the tenements—"a crossroads which, giving the virtual racial segregation that these policies would eventually entail, dramatically accelerated the Italian American endorsement of a 'white' identity along with an Italian one."[13] Race, language—specifically literacy—and national identity were strictly tied in with the linguistic history of the Italian American community. As Carnevale argues, "the overlapping language maintenance efforts of both Italian American leaders and the Italian Fascist government in 1930s and '40s New York City illustrate the different interpretations of Italian American identity in relation to language usage . . . [and] the competing notions of identity that were circulating within the community at a critical moment in the creation of Italian Americans."[14]

This complex formation of an Italian American identity was facilitated by media processes related to the Italian *cultura dello spettacolo*, which had always been an asset Italians could count upon, even within the rapid development of sound cinema and radio.

In such a dramatic Babel of identities, the American film industry had to take into account at least two Italian identities: one had emerged from an immigrant culture in the United States, and the other could be traced to Fascist Italy. But after its near collapse in the late 1920s, in 1930, the Italian film industry had a new lease on life and was now ready to defend national identity against exposure to foreign cultures and to propagate itself throughout the Fascist "Empire."[15]

In 1930, Pittaluga's Cines, equipped with the American RCA Photophone, inaugurated its new facilities in the presence of the minister of corporations, Giuseppe Bottai, while Giuseppe Barattolo at Caesar Film, opted for the German sound system, Tobis Klangfilm.[16] Both companies began to produce sound films in Italian, but the national output for that year counted (only) twelve titles. The regime supported this effort with government funds, and encouraged the modernization of the production structure, which led, in the mid-1930s, to the creation of Cinecittà, modeled after the American studios. Thus, Italian sound cinema was not a phoenix rising from the ashes, but a new creature, modern and centralized, that engaged more actively with stage, radio, music, and comic books or satirical magazines: in short, a modern intermedia culture industry.[17] The publication of books and magazines of international standard reinforced this process. Umberto Barbaro, for instance, translated Russian film theory into Italian as early as 1932. He also taught its principles to young filmmakers (who would later become the masters of neorealism[18]) at the National Film School, founded by Alessandro Blasetti, which, in 1935, became the *Centro Sperimentale*. The school even hosted Rudolph Arnheim, who had fled Nazi Germany. That same year, Venice hosted the first film festival in the world—the *Mostra d'Arte Cinematografica*. The very term *art* indicates continuity with the aesthetic vocation of Italian silent cinema, namely to privilege cinema's cultural and artistic values. However, the location—the Venice Lido—was chosen to assist a supporter of the regime, Count Volpi di Misurata, who at that time was engaged in developing the Venice Lido for tourism through a project focusing on modernization and consumerism, at the time limited to the upper classes. The festival boasted an approach to cinema as art, without ideological bias, presenting all kinds of international films—a cultural choice that the Fascist university film organizations, the GUFs, favored too. This openness to international circuits (and markets)—and even to Soviet cinema—together with a drive for modernization, has encouraged some historians to define Fascist culture as "pluralist,"[19] a rather overgenerous interpretation. But Italian sound cinema was indeed an "open door," a *zona franca*, welcoming Jewish intellectuals and a generation of young critics, screenwriters, and directors who would later become anti-Fascists.

In the 1930s, cinema became the regime's "most powerful weapon" (as one could read on the façade of the *Centro Sperimentale*) and the first mass medium in Italy; and yet, in 1933, Italian sound film production amounted to only twenty-seven titles.

The transformation of Italian cinema in the direction of modernity, internationalism, and soon of "realism" followed the ideological and political *trasformismo* of Fascism from "revolutionary" to corporatist and colonialist.[20] This process began in the early 1930s and produced a new film culture, with Italian stars, genres, and filmmakers working in the name of nationalism and imperialism, and with the direct support of the regime. However, this history of Italian cinema did not interact directly with the Italian American experience, although it did play a major role in the diaspora community's viewing habits and its *cultura dello spettacolo*.

Sound and Language

An extensive bibliography has grown on the topic of the "coming of sound," addressing the technological and intermedia as well as the economic, institutional, and aesthetic facets of the new medium.[21] Here the discussion is limited to the impact of sound as it impinges on the relationship between Italian identity and American cinema, focusing on cultural issues such as the two manifestations of "Italianness"—one at home and one abroad.

After World War I, the American film industry depended heavily on the foreign revenues that sound could have drastically reduced since sound required equipment that was often unavailable to international audiences because of technological inadequacy and language barriers would preclude the appreciation of a film in English.[22]

On the Italian side, Mario Quargnolo discussed the diverse approaches the industry devised to maintain the profitable Italian market in a book titled *La parola ripudiata*, where the term *ripudiata* (rejected) hints at the Italian resistance to American talkies.[23] In the early days, Italy was particularly cautious both in the production and in the screening of sound films: *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927) premiered in Rome as late as April 1929 and only after 1931 did sound become the norm in Italian first-run film theaters. This technological "delay" was accompanied by the regime's ban on foreign language dialogue imposed by law in October 1930: "The Minister of the Interior established that as from today permission to present films that CONTAIN EVEN THE MINIMAL DIALOGUE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES will NOT be granted. Consequently, any sound film, without distinction, when receiving the (censorship) certificate, will find therein the condition that EVERY FOREIGN DIALOGUE OR SPOKEN FOREIGN LANGUAGE SCENE be suppressed."[24] This severe measure constituted a sort of iron curtain that isolated the country from direct contact with foreign cultures through the primary experience of language, highlighting Fascism's heavy investment in media nationalism and addressing a key issue: *la questione della lingua*, the issue of the national language.[25] To remedy the failure of the mission to "*fare gli italiani*," and create a shared national identity, the regime concentrated on the use of a common language with a high cultural profile: Italian. Through radio and film, the Italian language changed from the literary Italian of writers and intellectuals into the artificial classless and nonregional Italian of Fascist media.

From the commercial point of view, this legislation was absurd: it virtually paralyzed film distribution in Italy, considering that so few sound films in Italian were being made at the time. It also meant that from 1930 to 1933, American (and foreign) films were shown but "silenced," that is, shown with original songs and sound effects but with intertitles instead of dialogue. In 1930, according to Quargnolo, 137 films were "silenced," in 1931, 145, and in 1932, 108—transforming Italian film viewing experiences into reading marathons.

Traditional film historiographies state that the first talkie in Italian was *La canzone dell'amore* (Gennaro Righelli, 1930) based on a short story by Luigi Pirandello (another confirmation of the continued artistic aspirations of Italian cinema); in fact, *Sei tu l'amore?* (Alfredo Sabato) was made at the same time, but in Hollywood and by emigrant performers. The film opened in Milan one month before the Italian production—another historical detail national historiography ignores.[26] Other films in Italian were made in New York a few months apart, so that *Variety*, in *Foreign Film News*, ran an article under the headline "US-made Italian Language Films Outnumbered Product in Home Land," stating: "Just as many, or more Italian talkers are now being made outside of Italy, with America leading the way. Half a dozen Italian talkers are now in production in New York by that many indie companies and a few Italian language films are being made in Italy and France."[27] And this was indeed the case, with many Italian filmmakers working in Europe, in Paris-Joinville or Berlin, in order to learn how to make sound films. But no history of Italian cinema mentions the films in Italian made in the United States—a silence which confirms the need for more transatlantic investigations.

Why (and how) did Italian Americans make their own Italian films in the United States? Here, the issue of language assumes specific connotations as the introduction of sound in cinema in the early 1930s and the diffusion of radio at home impacted a community that neither was fluent English nor in Italian. On the East Coast, Italian Americans developed a kind of *koiné*, a common language made up of a mix of southern Italian dialects with a strong Neapolitan component and a sprinkling of American English.[28] Therefore two simultaneous linguistic processes would take place: the progression toward English, driven by the American media (film and radio) and American assimilationist politics on the one hand, and the move away from dialects toward Italian imposed by the Fascist regime on the other.

The issue of language intensified in the 1930s because the Italian immigrant stage started interacting with the media of radio and film, as well as other ethnic communities, and widened its audience outside the urban areas of New York City. Furthermore, the immigrant stage supplied personnel for American films spoken "in Italian" or self-produced in Hollywood or on the East Coast, but also, and with increasing regularity, for Hollywood. In addition, some Italian performers went into radio broadcasting, both at the national level (for example, Nino Martini) or at local and ethnic stations.

Silent cinema had allowed American films to be shown everywhere simply by translating the intertitles, but dialogue in English was another matter altogether. Initially, the linguistic barrier was overcome by two bizarre, as well as unexpected, modes of production: the American film industry proposed multiple language versions (MLVs) and translated its own products, while linguistically nonassimilated ethnic-national communities produced films in their own languages in the United States. Both Hollywood's MLVs and Italian films made in the United States appeared in the period from 1930 to 1932; dubbing (and nationalist policies) took care of the problem in later years.

The introduction of sound implied far more than a technological shift: it reinforced Hollywood's domination of international markets and the common imaginary by changing the very experience of spectatorship, but it sparked reactions from national cultures too. Italy was a sensitive case because of Mussolini's 1930 law banning films spoken in foreign languages, but also because sound revealed the ambiguity of the concept of "*lingua italiana*." Was the language of those who lived in Italy and spoke the Italian of Dante the same as the Italian spoken with regional accents by Italians abroad? This apparently Byzantine distinction had a forceful impact on the attribution of Italian identity. In Hollywood, this process not only implied having to translate American dialogue into Italian but also questioned the validity of the accents of the performers who interpreted it. At the same time, films in Italian were being made in Hollywood and New York with the active participation of the immigrant community, who took national identity into its own hands and marked out a new territory for Italian films within US cinema.

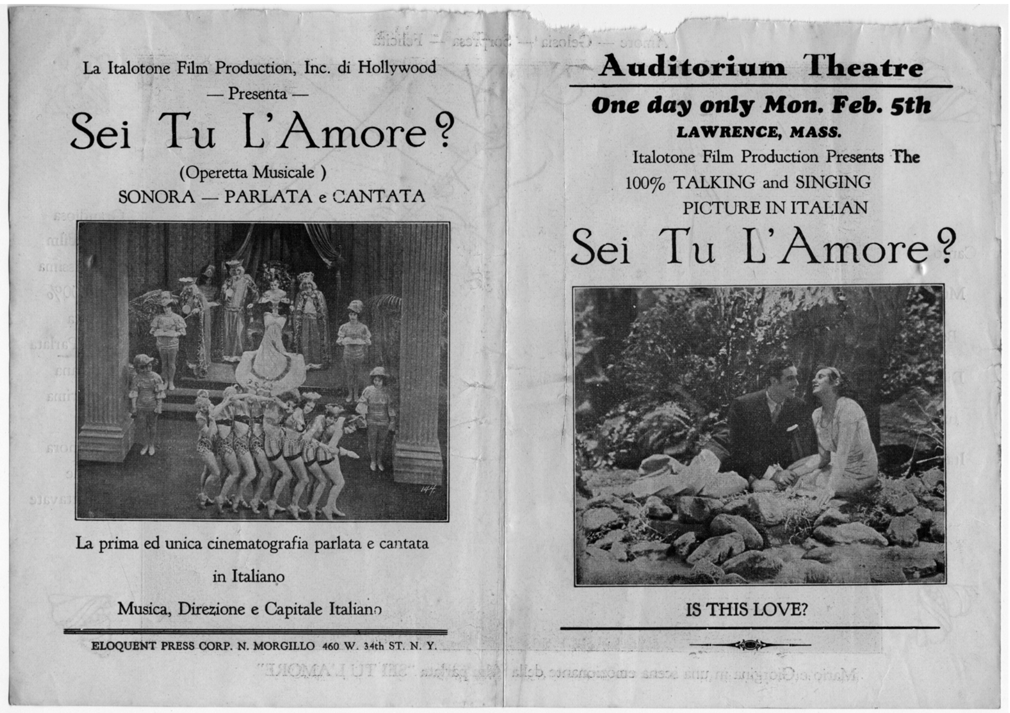
Films in Italian Made in Hollywood

In most traditional accounts, the introduction of sound is followed by the adoption of Hollywood strategies regarding foreign markets, namely the MLVs, but Italy early on gave clear signals that it was not willing to open its theaters to Hollywood talkies, so the American film industry waited cautiously to see what would happen. In terms of both chronology and agency, the first "American" films in Italian were made by Italian immigrant performers.

The *AFI Catalog* on ethnic cinema, *Within Our Gates*, lists seventeen films in Italian made in the United States in the 1930s. Three were made in Hollywood, all the others—with the addition of musical shorts—were made within the East Coast Italian immigrant community. The two American film productions by "colonial artists" differ because the Italian films made in California integrated the Hollywood experience with the traditions of Italian middle-class culture, whereas the films made on the East Coast were rooted in the popular culture of the southern Italian stage.

The first film in Italian, *Sei tu l'amore?*, was made in Hollywood. The circumstances that allowed this unexpected event to happen involve immigrant performers Guido Trento and Alberto Rabagliati (fig. 4.1).

In 1927, Rabagliati arrived in Hollywood as the winner of an Italian contest launched by Fox to find new talents. In Italy, director Alessandro Blasetti, a strong advocate of the



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Sei Tu L'Amore?

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Figure 4.1. *Sei tu l'amore?* (1930) produced by immigrant performers in Hollywood was the first film with dialogue in Italian to be screened in Italy. (Courtesy of the George Eastman Museum.)

renaissance of Italian cinema, harshly criticized this contest. In an article entitled *Il nostro oro* (Our gold), Blasetti attacked the Hollywood studios which, in his opinion, having lost their creativity, were "stealing" Italian performers, "our only weapon, and our only hope" to make money from their value ("gold") while impoverishing the Italian film industry.[29] He referred to Valentino, Carminati, and Manetti, who were making Hollywood rich with their (Italian) art, and directly asks the Fascist government to take measures against this unfair competition and stop the contest. Blasetti's attack on Hollywood and its exploitation of foreign (namely Italian) talent signals the new awareness of an Italian film intellectual about the human resources Hollywood was draining from European cinemas, barely masking his bitterness over the weakness of the Italian industry and its inability to use and value its actors. Italian cinema had started reacting to Hollywood's hegemony.

In the meantime, the winner of the Fox contest, Rabagliati, left for Hollywood, but he appeared in only three American films, starting with a small role in *Street Angel* (Frank Borzage, 1928), cast as a *carabiniere* alongside Guido Trento and then credited as Gino Conti—given the difficult pronunciation of his Italian last name—in *Making the Grade* (Alfred E. Green, 1929). He was uncredited instead in *Let's Go Native* (Leo McCarey, 1930).

In 1929, Trento and Rabagliati, both underemployed, had the idea of making a film in Italian for the immigrant and the national markets. They toured California in an old Ford looking for sponsors and trying to convince the (numerous) winemakers of Italian origins to contribute. They obtained "shares of five and ten dollars deposited by the Italians [working] in Los Angeles at the Italian Vineyard Guasti,"[30] and set up Italotone Productions under the direction of Alfredo Verrico.[31]

From the surviving stills in the Ruggieri collection, *Sei tu l'amore?* was not a small production and included chorus girls and musical numbers.[32] Alfredo Sabato, a minor actor, directed the film; Rabagliati and the beautiful contralto Luisa Caselotti (who was later featured in *Il grande sentiero*) were the leads. The cast included Hollywood Italian immigrant performers Henry Armetta, Augusto Galli, and Inez Palange (soon to appear as Tony's mother in Howard Hawks's *Scarface*).[33]

With added songs—a must in the early days of sound—*Sei tu l'amore?* is the story of three men (Galli, Armetta, and Mario De Domenicis), who save a young milliner (Caselotti) from suicide and decide to support her. They open an elegant shop for her which allows her to climb the social ladder. In the end, the painter, Mario (Rabagliati) declares his love and marries her. Trento's script was an adaptation from a play by Piero Mazzoletti which was performed in Italy in 1925 by the prestigious Menichelli-Falconi company. Trento therefore utilized a recent work from the Italian bourgeois theater, focused on a working girl and her aspirations to upward social mobility, well suited to an American narrative. *Sei tu l'amore?* constitutes a truly Italian and American product: an Italian film produced in Hollywood, in a sense anticipating the "white telephone" comedies (Italian Fascist films catering to petty bourgeois tastes) and a modern musical comedy, quite different from the East Coast *sceneggiate* (popular dramas with songs).

The film was positively reviewed by the American press that emphasized how it was "a natural for Italian neighborhoods."[34] Its cultural "Italian Americanness" emerges in a theater program from the Ruggieri Collection: the front page, in English, utilizes the typical promotional jargon of early American talkies. The back of the program, in Italian, proposes a still showing the chorus girls on a staircase like in a musical, defining the film as an "*operetta musicale*," emphasizing that it had been made by Italians using Italian capital. The center spread had a picture of Rabagliati, sporting an elegant mustache, and Caselotti with the caption "*Italianissima al 100%. La prima film sonora che aspettavate*."[35] Both graphics and quality of this leaflet differ from most of the other theater programs in the Ruggieri Collection: it's clean Hollywoodian aesthetic and design is accompanied by text in Italian. The Italian American characteristics of the film reappear in a review of *Sei tu l'amore?* in the *New York Journal* (November 18, 1930), which acknowledged its Italian source but noted: "The plot of the production recalls 'Three Wise Fools.'" This association with a film directed by King Vidor in 1923 is a sign of one of the directions immigrant performer culture could take in its interaction with American cinema: Hollywood was a model and indeed they imitated it; but they Italianized it too by using an Italian source, Italian songs, and Hollywood Italian performers.

The film was distributed both in America and in Italy, where Rabagliati presented it personally. *Sei tu l'amore?* obtained the official censorship visa on the same day (September 30, 1930) as *La canzone dell'amore*, but Rabagliati "premiered" it in Milan on September 11, whereas *Canzone* opened in Rome on October 8; therefore, it was indeed the first film in Italian to be screened in Italy.[36]

Italian reviewers had divergent reactions to the film. Some appreciated Caselotti's performance but criticized the plot, recognizing in "good old man Armetta, one of the oldest and more appreciated character actors in Hollywood." Others ridiculed "the terrible accent of Armetta, one of those artists that has lived for decades in America and only remembers some phrases in dialect."[37] This comment echoes later ones by Italian reviewers about the MLVs, irritated by the regional accents of Italian immigrant performers. This "irritation" expressed the uneasiness with the removed and negated experience of Italian emigration that, in making itself *heard*, brought about a distancing laden with guilty feelings. It is these Italian anti-emigrationist (and anti–southern Italian) attitudes which, together with nationalist considerations, can explain the absence in Italian film histories of a film in Italian made in Hollywood earlier than in the homeland.

After *Sei tu l'amore?* Rabagliati's film career came to an end, and he devoted himself to music. When he returned home in 1938, he championed American swing on Italian radio, which actually played modern American music, including jazz.[38]

Another "film in Italian," *The Queen of Sparta*, was made in Hollywood, but it was simply the "synchronization" of an Italian silent film about Helen of Troy.[39] The practice of "synchronizing" a popular silent film with sound was quite common in the early 1930s; the unusual aspect, in this case, was that the soundtrack was put together in Hollywood rather than in New York, where the Italian distributors and many theater actors resided.

Bruno Valletti (1932), who also signed Farfariello's *The Movie Actor*, directed *Tormento* (1932) in Hollywood which received a favorable review in *Hollywood Filmograph*:

> It may surprise many people to know that Italians are making pictures for Italian consumption right here in Hollywood. We previewed the first "Triumphant Picture" as

> they are named, a few days ago and were greatly surprised at the results achieved. The story is of a student of music who is torn between her great love of her art and her love for a music teacher, who is responsible for her success. The production is lavish in every sense and some of the scenes in and around the theatre, . . . are splendidly done. Livia Maracci is the Italian star featured and she possesses both talent and great beauty. . . . There is no doubt that splendid productions of this character will be an incentive for other foreign countries to make their pictures in Hollywood.[40]

Thus, the reviewer was under the impression that this was an experiment by filmmakers coming from Italy, while cast and crew were actually Italians already in Hollywood. The lack of differentiation between Italians from Italy and those living in the United States was common on American soil, while it would be immediately recognized as dissonant in Italy itself. The dialectic in place within this type of production is not simply Italian versus American, or regional versus national identity, but Italian in America versus Italian at home, passing via Hollywood and New York.

The Era of Multiple Language Version Films

This section takes a closer look at the American film industry's strategies in translating its films into different languages in order to emphasize the differences in *cultura dello spettacolo* in New York and Hollywood.

According to cultural historians, translation is "a dynamic space of exchange, mediation and cultural debate"[41] which implies "the relationship between language and lived experience."[42] These concepts help to explain why the translation of Hollywood films into Italian was quite a curious and complex compromise in terms of national identity, and generally speaking, a failed experiment.

In 1930, the Italian Fascist law banning films in foreign languages created a difficult situation for the American film industry, given that dubbing was not yet an option. At first, Hollywood tried to have stars say the main dialogue in various national languages. (For example, in her first talkie, *Anna Christie*, Garbo pronounced some lines in Italian for the export print). This technique, however, required specific (thus costly) retakes and was soon abandoned in dramas; but it remained in comedies, such as those with Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. Indeed their "funny" Italian, with its strong English accent, added a comic dimension to their Italian films, as in the case of *Pardon Us*, for the Italian version of which Guido Trento played the prison warden. *Golden Calf*, among other films, opened with a prologue in Italian, to which Fox added an "introduction" by Frank Puglia.[43] Thus American film companies entrusted these two performers, who came from the Italian immigrant stage and had played relevant roles in Hollywood pictures, with the role of messengers and mediators in front of Italian audiences.

The first systematic solution Hollywood devised to export talkies worldwide was that of MLVs, a physical "translation" of a film with different national casts, working on the same script, shooting on the same set, with the same costumes and scenery. Actors of different nationalities and languages interpreted the main dialogue, alternating on the set for each scene, like in a theater performance.

The American film industry differentiated European costumers according to considerations of costs and benefits, establishing that the main languages for MLVs would be Spanish, German, and French. Italy belonged to those countries "whose territory was too small for economic production of films in the national language and where the exhibition of films in the second language was risky."[44] Furthermore the 1930 Italian law limited the possibility of making American films in Italian, which explains the small number of MLVs in Italian, and the even smaller investment in their quality.

While Paramount developed a special program for foreign versions in Joinville (France) with European personnel, Fox and MGM made Italian versions of their films in California. To coordinate this complex operation, the studios engaged bilingual personnel but without a specific competence in translating and screenwriting. In 1930, for instance, Puglia was hired as head of the Italian department at Fox.[45] After Puglia, Fox hired editor Louis Loeffler, who had worked on Edwards's productions in Italy, where he had met and married an Italian woman.[46] At MGM, (minor) actor Francesco Maran oversaw the MLVs process.

So far historians have identified only two Italian MLVs: Fox's *The Big Trail* (Raoul Walsh, 1930) entitled *Il grande sentiero*, and MGM's *Men of the North* (Hal Roach, 1930) retitled *Luigi la volpe*.[47] The documents reveal that the two Italian versions had different production processes: *Il grande sentiero* was made one year after the production of *The Big Trail*, together with three other foreign versions, by intercutting dialogue scenes shot for the purpose of translation, with the action sequences from the original version, whereas *Men of the North* was shot in five simultaneous versions, the usual mode of MLV production. Since the Italian law on foreign language films was passed on October 22, 1930 and MGM had started the MLV of *Men of the North* in March 1930, their strategy must have been an autonomous decision, independently of the Italian measures; likewise, the Italian translation of *The Big Trail*, originally entitled *Alla conquista del West*, was dated October 31, 1930.

The Big Trail, an epic western directed by Walsh and starring John Wayne, was shot in Spanish, German, French, and Italian, using the Spanish version, *La Gran Jornada*, as a template. Supervised by William Goetz, each version was directed by a different filmmaker. Loeffler—with the assistance of actor Augusto Galli and a script translated by Alberto Valentino (the actor's brother)—directed the Italian version, *Il grande sentiero*, which featured Franco Corsaro and Luisa Caselotti (in the original roles played by John Wayne and Marguerite Churchill), Guido Trento (the rival Clark), Frank Puglia (uncle Luca), Fred Malatesta (Pa Basco), and Agostino Borgato (Red Flack, the murderer) (figs. 4.2 and 4.3).

Men of the North also was shot in English, French, Spanish, German, and Italian, and signed by Hal Roach, the director of the American version. The Italian version, *Luigi la volpe*, cast Franco Corsaro (Luigi), Barbara Leonard (Nedra, the female protagonist in the Spanish-language version too), Marino Bello, and Paul Porcasi (Nedra's father).

Both films were made by the American companies that had been most active in Italy during the silent period. Indeed, the strategies of the majors in relation to MLVs reflect

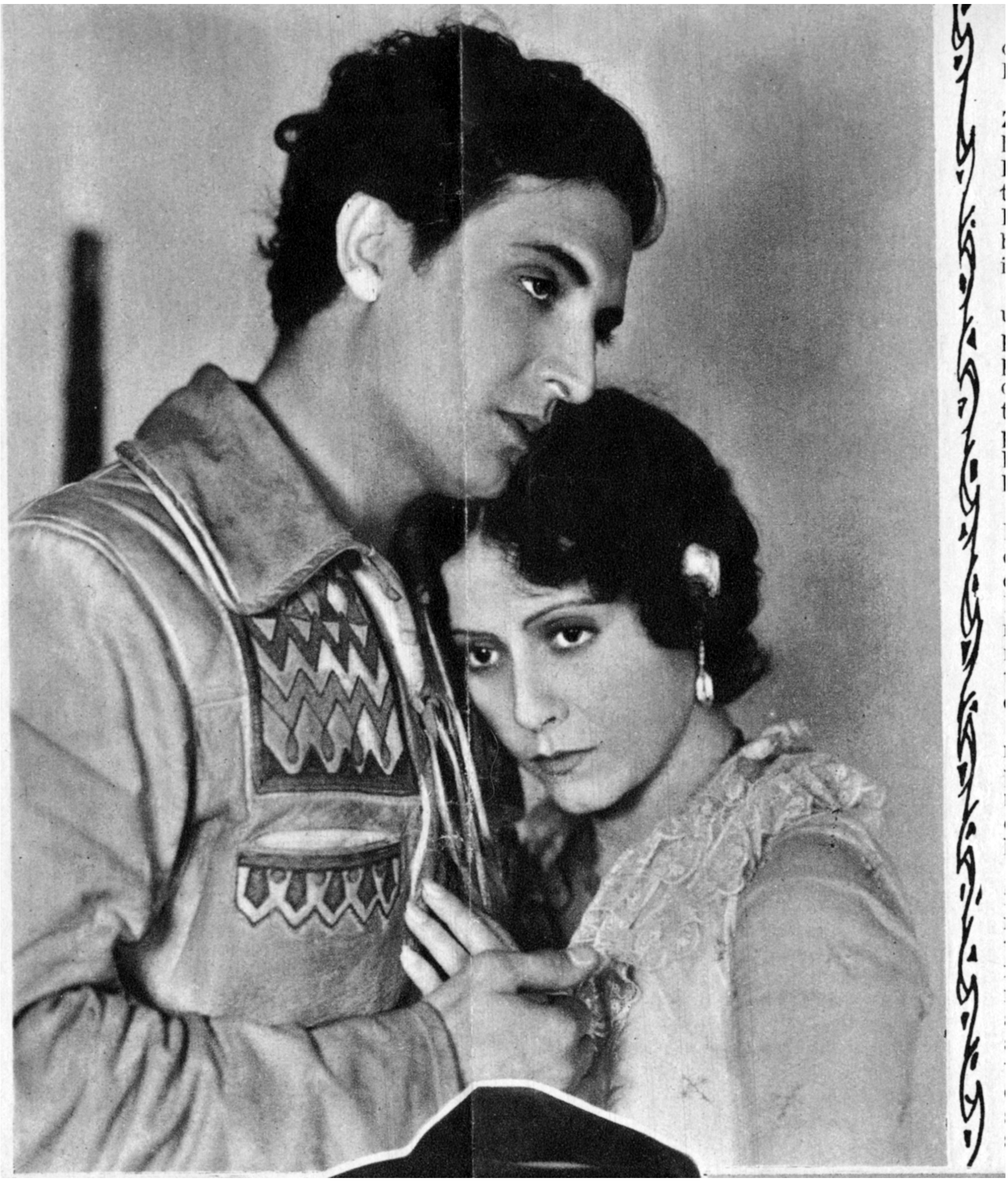


Figure 4.2. Franco Corsaro and Luisa Caselotti in *Il grande sentiero*, the Italian language version] of Raoul Walsh's *The Big Trail* (1930).

their commercial positions in diverse geographic areas: they prioritized those where they could take advantage of the best market conditions.

According to the preproduction documents, the shooting of *Men of the North* began without a final script; Roach and screenwriter Richard Schayer wrote the scenes each night before shooting resumed the next day. The five versions were shot together, with the studio continuously complaining about the slowness of the process, which was caused by the difficulties of making multiple versions involving five different casts. Scenes on loca-

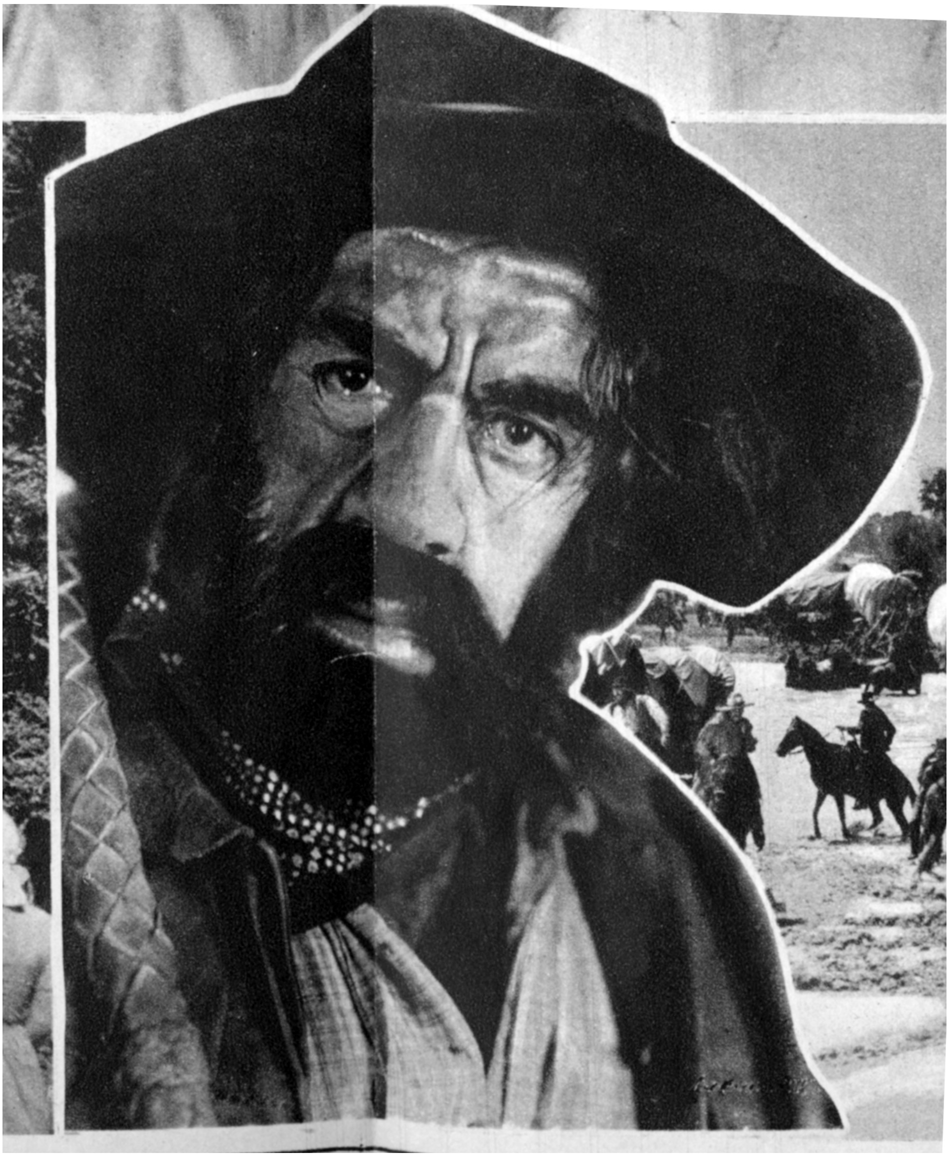


Figure 4.3. Agostino Borgato in the role of Red Flack, the murderer in *Il grande sentiero*.

tion were shot with doubles common to all the five versions, which is just one of the many details confirming how complicated the system was. All the actors had to resemble each other to some extent in order to be able to shoot medium or long-shot action scenes, using the same doubles for all versions.

The scripts of *Il grande sentiero* have shooting instructions in English, dialogues in Italian, and a bilingual script with the original English dialogues and their literal translation into Spanish to help the director and technicians: it is easy to imagine the linguistic confusion on the set. At the beginning of each sequence the script also bore, in capital letters, the words TO BE SHOT for the scenes to be made from scratch, or TO BE USED AND DUPED for scenes to be taken from the original version. Surprisingly enough, more scenes were to be shot from scratch than duped, which explains why this mode of production was not common practice. Obviously, the new scenes were all dialogues and involved the principal actors, that is the foreign language casts, while the spectacular or mass scenes came from the original print.

The translations of these two films contained variants that reveal how this was not mere linguistic work, but a more complex cultural operation. As in the presentation of American films to Italian audiences, the names of the main characters were all "Italianized" but while in Italy this practice did not affect the nationality of the character, and only transformed any old John into Giovanni, the Hollywood MLVs created a degree of ambiguity in this respect because the narrative was restructured around the translation of the name. In *The Big Trail*, for instance, the pioneers moving to conquer the West in the Spanish-language version became Spanish families, while the Italian script described them as coming "from all nations" and slightly Italianized only the protagonists.[48] In the American version, the film began with a fade-in on the convoy ready to leave, but the Spanish and Italian versions opened with an ancient map of the United States and a voice-over in order to contextualize the action, with an arrow indicating the places cited in the narration to explain the epic tale of the West to a non-American public.

The names of the pioneers were changed in order to "Latinize" them: the Bascom family of the original became the Orenas in Spanish and the Bascos in Italian. The original role of Pa Bascom was split into two characters, Pa Basco and a priest, who takes up the religious functions of pronouncing a prayer before the convoy takes off as well as celebrating baptisms and weddings. This religious figure and the reference to the missionaries in the introductory narration, absent in *The Big Trail*, represents an attempt at "cultural integration," with references to the Roman Catholicism, a significant element in both Spanish and Italian culture. The plot changed too: the Spanish-language version is quite similar to the American one and only eliminates some group scenes (the most expensive to shoot), whereas the Italian-language version emphasizes the love story and plays down the more adventurous parts. It even makes jealousy the reason for the rivalry between the protagonist, Gianni Coleman (Corsaro) and Paolo Clark (Trento)—which no other version does. The Italian version also accentuates the melodramatic tone, making Clark a treacherous villain and focusing on his passions, rather than on the "conquest of the West," thus almost changing the genre. Coleman's original ability with a knife is emphasized, evoking an undesirable stereotype: the Italian-knife association. An unexpected variant is the emphasis on Coleman's positive attitude toward Native Americans.

The "translation" adapted the narrative and the dialogue to better represent the nationals involved, but while the Spanish-language version makes the Spanish people part of the conquest of the West, the Italian-language version is awkward in that they appear as incidental presences. At the linguistic level, the translation is clumsy, the language archaic, and the syntax contorted.

Men of the North was a sort of "Zorro" movie set in Canada, but the different Louis/Luigis were not identified with the nationality of the language spoken. There were, however, some changes with cultural implications. In the American version, Nedra, the bandit's girlfriend, was rather independent, whereas in the Italian script she is submissive, as she would be expected to be according to the patriarchal attitudes Americans attributed to Italians. The script of *Luigi la volpe* also had serious linguistic problems, with mistakes in spelling: Nedra calls the *caporale* "corporale," probably influenced by the American term *corporal*, but she uses a word that in Italian actually means "bodily." The dialogues in the script of *Luigi la volpe* often contain the notation "*ad lib*," indicating that some lines were improvised, that is translated by the actors during the shooting. This method might have been a common practice in MLVs, where actors could also be translators. Furthermore, these studios did not employ personnel with the linguistic and professional competences necessary to translate a specialized text such as a script, either because of the limited investment in Italian-language versions or because the lack of exchange with the Italian film industry did not make suitable personnel available.

Most problematic, however, was the lack of a coherent cultural project: American studios did not have yet a strategy for how much each character (and film) would remain American and to what extent it would, or should, be "translated." *Il grande sentiero* chose a limited Italianization of the character within a plausible context; *Luigi la volpe* on the other hand did not specifically refer to Luigi as Italian but had him say: "Questi sono dei ceclioni che vengono nientemeno che da Rocca D'Annunzio. (*laughs*) Poi c'abbiamo del prosciutto, ci sono dei gallette . . . salame." These are vernacular names of foods perhaps from Abruzzo (culturally part of southern Italy), but it is quite unlikely they could be found in the Canadian woods where the action takes place.

It might seem strange that dubbing would solve these cultural problems. From a theoretical point of view, the MLVs proposed indeed a more plausible solution to translation as it maintained the body/voice unity of the actor. Furthermore, if, as Natasha Durovicova argues, "[one recognizes] the sound track's importance for the effect of unity that underwrites the smooth operation of the cinematic apparatus, MLVs would appear to be the most appropriate—even necessary—strategy in order for American cinema to have remained the universal 'good object.'"[49] On the contrary, the MLV was the first strategy to be discarded. "Although dubbing and subtitles were only partial solutions to the alienating effects of foreign voices, these adaptations of the dialogue continued to present the Hollywood original as international, and the negotiated version, which in one way or another divided sound and image tracks, as a local variant." Maltby and Vasey argue, "the bifurcation of sound and image localized the act of consumption, not Hollywood's act of production."[50] MLVs failed because "aesthetically these films were 'terrible,' and financially they turned out to be a disaster . . . [they were] too standardized to satisfy the cultural diversity of their target audience, but too expensively differentiated to be profitable."[51]

In less than three years, this strategy was abandoned and every country adopted the most suitable cultural solution in order to continue to consume American cinema. During this short period, however, Hollywood revealed its true nature as a national industry rather than as the "universal language" it claimed to be.[52]

Italian Actors in Hollywood as Cultural Mediators

The actors utilized in *Luigi la volpe* and *Il grande sentiero* were all permanent immigrants in the United States or second-generation Italians. The protagonist of both films was Franco Corsaro, who interpreted characters originally played by John Wayne and Gilbert Roland (a popular Mexican actor). He was handsome and "Latin," but it is unclear why he was selected by two different studios for their only MLVs in Italian, given that he was neither a popular film actor nor a famous personality on the immigrant stage. He was born in Sicily and moved to the United States to accompany Angelo Musco on his American tour and sing (as a tenor) in Philadelphia. Italian-born director Robert Vignola gave him a small part in *Tropic Madness*, alongside Alberto Valentino, and on the strength of this one credit, or maybe these contacts, Fox and MGM hired him. According to Quargnolo, after *Il grande sentiero* and *Luigi la volpe*, he returned to Italy in order to regularize his position as a national, but once back in the United States his career stalled and he worked in dubbing at Fox until 1933, when all these experiments stopped.[53] In the mid-1930s, Corsaro worked both on Italian-language radio and on the immigrant stage and had minor roles in American films (fig. 4.4).

Born in Bridgeport, Luisa Caselotti came from a family of musicians (her mother was a Neapolitan soprano and her father a music teacher from Friuli). Her sister Adriana was the original voice (and inspiration for the looks) of Disney's *Snow White* (1937). Luisa too was beautiful and sang contralto on CBS radio: she was also a fairly good dancer. She played in *Sei tu l'amore?*, which probably caused her to be cast in the Italian-language version of *The Big Trail*, and was also involved in Italian-language dubbing at Fox. She made no other films but sang in opera in New York.[54]

If we compare the casting of Corsaro and Caselotti in the Italian-language versions with that of polyglot performers such as Greta Garbo, Maurice Chevalier, Adolphe Menjou, and Brigitte Helm, who acted in other national MLVs, the modest investment in the Italian-language versions is more than evident. It is also hard to understand what the appeal of these films might have been on the Italian market, given that they utilized unknown Italian American actors. As with Tina Modotti, these performers might have been chosen because they were attractive and "Italian looking"—a justifiable investment in the empty slot of Italian stardom in Hollywood.

One of the actors in *Luigi la volpe* was an ambiguous character, Marino Bello. Born in Trieste, he emigrated to the United States at the turn of the century, settling first in Chicago, where he married Jean Harlow's mother. He moved to Hollywood with his wife to follow his stepdaughter and was associated with gangster Bugsy Siegel.[55] Bello probably frequented other sets, but *Luigi la volpe* is his only official credit.

As well as directing Italian-language dubbing at MGM, Francesco Maran had a sizeable filmography even though, for the most part, he had small roles in films with other Italian performers, or in films in Spanish, such as *Sombras de Gloria* and *El cantante de Napoles* with Enrico Caruso Jr.

The cast of *Luigi la volpe* also included some lesser-known Italian performers such as Lamberto Zanassi, Lillian Savin, Luigi Colombo (in the cast of Italian films made in

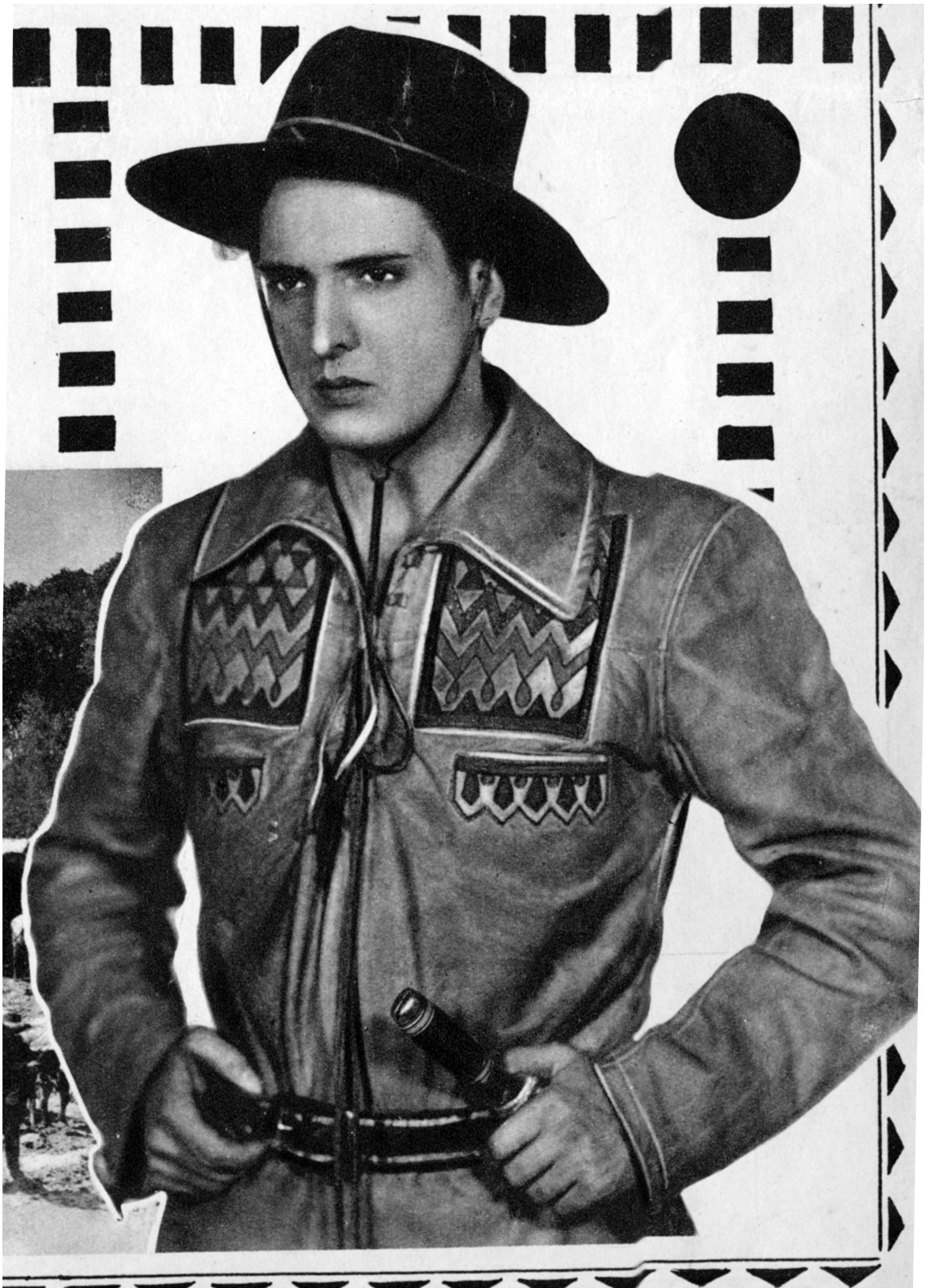


Figure 4.4. Franco Corsaro as Gianni Coleman in *Il grande sentiero*.

Hollywood, *Sei tu l'amore?* and *Tormento*), Alessandro or Sandrino Giglio (the son of Clemente, one of the main figures of *cultura dello spettacolo* in Little Italy), Alfredo Fiorenza, and Aristide De Leoni. The cast of *Il grande sentiero* included Argentinian Italian Cesare Vanoni, Blado Minuti, and Oreste Seragnoli, a popular *capocomico* of the Italian theater in San Francisco. These minor participants were performers coming from the stage and radio, and all of them had already been active in the United States before joining the cast. In fact, the number of potential Italian extras for Hollywood films coming from the immigrant stage had grown considerably, and they found employment in these productions.

While the epic *Il grande sentiero* was successful in Italy, *Luigi la volpe* met with a lukewarm reception. Indeed, the overall reaction of Italian audiences to these Italian-language versions was negative. The Italians did not like them because the translations of the dialogue were poor and the accent was southern Italian. The problem was that, in casting, the American film industry equated Italians with Italian Americans, but in Italy these performers were perceived as migrants, "Italians abroad," distant relatives, and not as the sons and daughters of Italy. Negation, rejection, and, at times, even contempt often color Italy's relations with Italian Americans, but it took the advent of the talkies to bring this prejudice to the fore. By contrast, in the United States most average Americans would have perceived southern Italian immigrant actors as simply Italians, and would presume that what, and how they spoke, was Italian.

Since these films also have a New York release date, they clearly were not only conceived for export in Italy but also for migrant communities, including perhaps those in Latin America, where performers such as Puglia and Malatesta were popular. Fred Malatesta's work in the MLVs is quite illustrative of the cultural ambiguity of the whole process. In addition to playing Basco in *Il grande sentiero*, he performed in several Spanish-language versions such as *El precio de un beso* (in which Loeffler was credited as editor), *La mujer X* with Armetta and Borgato (premiered in Porto Rico) both MGM's films, and Fox's *Granaderos del Amor*, an operetta set in Tyrol and premiered in Santiago del Chile. Malatesta was also cast in French-language versions such as *L'amour guide* with Chevalier, and *La veuve joyeuse* (Lubitsch's *The Merry Widow*), both Paramount productions, which also featured Gino Corrado. The reason why he was cast in these films is unclear as he was not a national. Although his presence in *Il grande sentiero* makes sense, as does his later appearance Fox's *I'll Give a Million* (a 1938 remake by Walter Lang of the Italian film *Darò un milione*), the fact that he was also cast in the French- and Spanish-language versions not only indicates that he must have been proficient in these languages; it also attests to his professionalism and versatility as a performer and confirms that ethno-national identity policies in Hollywood were quite flexible. The use of Italian actors in MLVs in other languages was the logical development of the casting of Italian performers in the role of Europeans in silent cinema, and as Latinos in sound films, because of their "continental" looks or, later, Latin accents.

Mimì Aguglia, for instance, did not make Italian-language versions of American films, but she acted in as many as seven Spanish-language versions, probably because of her popularity in Latin America. As a matter of fact, the introduction of sound coincided with Mexican Repatriation (1929–1936), which led to the expulsion of at least one million

Mexicans from California, Texas, and Colorado, but this event is unlikely to have seriously affected the film world. The casting of Italians in Spanish-language versions, even though Spanish-speaking actors from Latin America were available, must be attributed to their versatility and to their previous presence on South American stages.

These cosmopolitan films end up representing an imaginary geography. Aguglia, for instance, performed in *Senora casada*, a comedy in Spanish set in Budapest that recalls the Italian "white telephone" films of the 1930s, or some Italian films in which the characters were American, but the street signals and the locations surrounding them were Italian. Strangely enough, in the early 1930s, at the very moment when realism began to pervade photography, and the concept of "the nation" enjoyed a renewed popular consensus, the geography of American and Italian cinemas became that of a nowhere land; cosmopolitan because imaginary.

Italian Dubbing in Hollywood

When dubbing became practicable, the American film industry had to find personnel who could speak Italian so as to overcome Mussolini's interdiction. Obviously, the first people to be called upon to do the job were Italian actors already active in the American cinema—such as Puglia, Porcasi, and Armetta—and, later, performers from the immigrant stage. But director Goffredo Alessandrini, who worked in dubbing at MGM, noted:

> All the actors came from the Italian colony in Los Angeles or were invited from New York. There were some Italian companies, let's say vernacular, Sicilian or Neapolitan, and for them to speak Italian, the real one, was a problem. And when they were not numerous enough we went "down town" Los Angeles, that is, in the "lower" city, where there were, today we would say members of Cosa nostra, but at that time they were good gangsters with a not-too-long criminal record, and we hired them as extras. In a comic film, as in the case of the first film I "synchronized"—a picture with Eddie Cantor—this was all right, the worse they spoke Italian the funnier it was, but not when dubbing films with Garbo and John Gilbert, sentimental or dramatic pictures.[56]

In the two phases in which American cinema was short of personnel to dub films—in the early 1930s and between 1943 and 1945—it made use of immigrant performers, but in both cases the Italian public reacted negatively to their Italian American accents. In 1933, the issue of Italian-language versions of American films was radically resolved by a new Fascist law, which forbade the screening of "films whose adaptation in Italian" had been done outside of Italy. This meant that Italian dubbing had to be done in Rome, where, in the meantime, a specialized work force had been trained.

Italian dubbing implied a linguistic appropriation of American cinema, but using an artificial Italian language, without accents and with an aftertaste of literary merit. Dubbing, as a rule, would transform a Mary into a Maria, but sometimes it even permitted changes in the nationality of the character—quite frequently in the case of gangsters, to remove the association of Italians with crime. Even Marco Polo (Gary Cooper) in Italy became a Scotsman and *The Adventures of Marco Polo* (Archie Mayo, 1938) transformed into *Uno scozzese alla corte del Gran Khan* (A Scot at the court of the Great Khan) due to the Italian censors' dislike of how the historical character had been described. In fact, dubbing and censorship were allies under the close surveillance of the regime and transformed American cinema into a curious product: American but, at the same time, familiar, given that it was being dubbed by the same actors who appeared in Italian films made in Italy.

The coming of sound and the consequent need for translators and for dramatists able to write dialogue attracted a flow of writers to Hollywood, in some cases with leftist tendencies.[57] Socialist writer and union organizer Arturo Giovannitti spent a short, and largely ignored, period in Hollywood too.[58] Well educated and a good communicator, he wrote in English and Italian and composed poetry in his dialect, *Abruzzese*. His oratory inflamed American tribunals as well as anti-Fascist rallies and radio broadcasts. In fact, Giovannitti used the traditional tools of exiled Italian political intellectuals—the press, oratory, and the stage. In 1916, Mimì Aguglia performed *Tenebre rosse*, a pacifist drama he had written, at the People's Theatre in New York. He also wrote an American version of the same, *As It Was in the Beginning*, thus acting not just as a translator of his own works but also as a binary cultural interlocutor.

An early leader of the anti-Fascist opposition in the United States, Giovannitti pioneered the political use of radio. The Great Depression had effectively set off a wave of preaching, invective, and reassurances via radio, from Father Coughlin to President Roosevelt's fireside chats.[59] Through the radio, Giovannitti reached out to the Italian community, as did his colleague, Fiorello La Guardia: their voices represented a much-needed corrective in a moment when Italian American radio was increasingly infiltrated by Fascist propaganda. Giovannitti's connection with Hollywood is, nonetheless, rather unexpected: "In the U.S. for some time, [Tito] Spagnol, who was anxious to enter the film world, met, around the Mid-Twenties, Giovannitti, . . . in whose company he visited, on a flourishing farm next to Ventura, in Southern California, 'Ettor, the famous Italian union organizer.' Among his guests was Eisenstein, who was furious about the obstacles posed by American censors to his film adaptation of the *pièce* by Theodor Dreiser *An American Tragedy*."[60]

But what was Giovannitti doing in Hollywood? Historian Fraser Ottanelli found the answer in an Italian diplomatic document—a note from the Italian consulate in San Francisco: "In 1930, Metro Goldwin Mayer in Los Angeles hired Giovannitti as a translator. Pietro Allegra was employed by the De Nobili Cigar Factory in New York. In both cases, Fascist authorities warned that if the two radicals were not fired, their US employers were in danger of jeopardizing access to the Italian market."[61] Thus Giovannitti was probably translating scripts for dubbing purposes. Since the studio, led by the conservative Louis B. Mayer, had a major interest in the Italian market, where it dominated film distribution,[62] it was particularly sensitive to the regime's pressures, especially if it meant getting rid of somebody who was not engaged in an essential activity, so Giovannitti was let go.

However, like Modotti's brief stay in Los Angeles, Giovannitti's visit to Hollywood reinforces the impression of the presence of a lively radical community and of an increased interaction between intellectuals, including Italians, and the mass media. But it also documents the extent of the Fascist regime's persecution of its enemies, even as far afield as Hollywood.

Napoli in New York

Neapolitan contributions to music, art, literature, and theater supplied southern Italians in New York with a rich *cultura dello spettacolo* and encouraged their resistance to cultural assimilation. In the period between the 1880s and World War II, Italian immigrants in New York constructed a separate cultural geography. In an attempt to recover the lost flavor of tomato sauce, spaghetti, and wine, Italians created the food industry (La Rosa, Atlantic and Ronzoni macaroni, Progresso tomatoes, Del Monte, Mondavi, Sebastiani, Gallo, and Ghirardelli[63]) and to preserve the experience of the *macchietta* (comic musical number) and *sceneggiata* (popular drama with songs), they developed their own world of popular entertainment. This cultural experience, which functioned in synergy with diverse media, was imbued with Neapolitan traditions that contributed to both its formation and diffusion while still remaining open to different musical and theatrical influences.

The Italian American theatrical community in New York was very active and worked in film, in radio, and on stage through a network of theaters, cafes, and social spaces, and in its twenty-six venues that regularly screened Italian-language films in town. This created a local *industria dello spettacolo* (performance industry) that was more dynamic than Italian media production at the time. Numerous records of Neapolitan songs were produced in the United States as American commercial Italian radio had a wider audience than public radio in Italy in that period. In the early 1930s, at least eleven feature films and several shorts spoken in Italian or dialect were made in New York, when the entire Italian film industry totaled twenty-seven titles.

Artists, films, and records traveled back and forth from Naples to New York in a continuous transatlantic flow, like "birds of passage," crossing the ocean as two alternating segments of the same culture. Neapolitan music was one of the main export-imports within this world of *spettacolo*. There were frequent exchanges between songs composed in Naples and those written in New York, as confirmed by the musical arrangements as well as the rhythmic composition.[64] The fundamental contribution of southern Italians to American music is undeniable: The Sicilian Nick La Rocca (or LaRocca) and his Original Dixieland Jass (*sic*) Band recorded the first jazz disc; violinist Joe Venuti and guitarist Eddie Lang (Salvatore Massaro) regularly played with African Americans as well as with the Dorsey Bros.;[65] Harry Warren (Salvatore Guaragna) composed *Chattanooga Choo Choo*, *I Only Have Eyes For You*, and *That's Amore* to name but a few of his hits;[66] Louis Prima "with his lighthearted depictions of Italian American life,"[67] and from Frank Sinatra to Bruce Springsteen, from the Four Seasons' doo-wop to Madonna, Italian Americans left a significant mark on US music history.

However, the Italian "monopoly of sitting rooms and singing lessons" and the wide diffusion of Italian musicians in bands and orchestras have been far more important than any individual figure.[68] The Italian tradition of the *conservatori* to educate orphans to play a musical instrument created a continuous supply of (southern) Italian players for street bands, as well as for pop and opera orchestras, all over the world.[69] Italian is *the* language of music all over the world; scores are full of indications in Italian, not because of the recognized influence of important Italian composers, but because for many centuries, music practitioners and music teachers everywhere often were Italian. Sicilian and black musicians interacted since the early days in New Orleans.[70] For example, the special walk of black funeral bands is quite similar to the movements adopted by people carrying saints' statues in Sicilian religious processions. Indeed, the contribution of (southern) Italians to African American jazz cannot be ignored.

Since the 1920s, through these exchanges and continuous interaction in the bands accompanying artists or recordings, Latin American, African American, Cuban, and even Kletzmer or Balkan music entered Italian popular songs, while the Neapolitan tradition, its style of singing or playing, and even the repertoire, penetrated popular music everywhere, from tango to Tin Pan Alley.

Music was also a protagonist on the radio, where the big orchestras were multiethnic, and jazz bands included blacks and Sicilians. Italian musicians also played in the multiethnic orchestras of the Prohibition era, in speakeasies and clubs. The interaction of contraband alcohol with spaces for entertainment and organized crime constitutes a background that cannot be ignored, but one should avoid drawing hasty connections between the elements involved in this combination and consider performers as part of organized crime.

The "birds of passage" brought back the rhythms they had played in New York to Naples, but the effect was not to "Americanize" Italian music, rather, they enriched it with all the influences music in America had absorbed from African, Latin American, and Eastern European players.

These experiences of southern Italian performers in entertainment are a precious example of the diverse cultural exchanges at play in migratory processes and the intermedia situation in which they functioned. They performed in different venues: stage and film theaters, but also cafés, night clubs, variety show palaces, and opera houses—spaces that offered artists diverse forms of performance and work. And what an opportunity it was, given that, at home, Fascism had severely curtailed *spettacoli* in Neapolitan dialect.

The list of media that helped spread Neapolitan music and theater in the United States included Italian language newspapers, which advertised shows and kept readers informed about premieres, locations, and performers. The recording and music publishing industries were fairly active too. The paper collection belonging to Francesco Pennino (Francis Ford Coppola's maternal grandfather) contains programs for several editions of the New York Piedigrotta festivals, a replica of the Neapolitan spectacular event.[71]

Pennino was active both on the music front and in the film business: he was a key composer of Neapolitan songs and a publisher of music (including piano rolls) with a rich catalog of dramatic and comic songs, well represented by the pleasant and memorable musical numbers (*Napule ve salute* and *Senza mamma*) his grandson used in *Godfather II*. His activities in film distribution are less known. He started as early as 1908, with American Biograph; in 1909, he distributed American, French, and Italian films in New Jersey, and in 1932, he became the American representative of Italian Caesar Film.[72] The main Italian sound film he distributed was *La vecchia signora* (Amleto Palermi, 1932) which circulated with *Veneziana*, an "illustrated song" performed by tenor Daniele Serra, with words by Pennino and music by Carmine Coppola; it was probably a musical short, produced in New York. He also ran three theaters and composed several film scores.[73]

Another important intermedia impresario was Clemente Giglio, who owned a theater at the crossing of Broadway and Canal, where he produced stage shows, associated with radio WOW, and proposed works performed by his son Sandro and his daughter Adele (Perzechella). He regularly screened Italian films in this theater and in the early 1930s produced the film *'O festino e 'a legge*.

When running a theater, making films, or performing in live shows, these artists could count upon an audience with a background that encompassed different doses of Neapolitan heritage as well as exposure to American entertainment and to the "Italianized" media of the 1930s. The Italian theater companies were the only ones to offer a show first on radio and later on stage, and not vice versa, and they continued in this way until the late 1940s.[74] Their enduring presence on the vaudeville stages, running well into the 1960s and continuing with their traditions of singing and of *macchiette* and pop jazz, was affectionately glorified in *Broadway Danny Rose* (Woody Allen, 1984). It is this tradition rooted in Neapolitan *spettacolo* (on the East Coast) that later produced a continuity among performers, practitioners, and genres, exemplified by the Coppolas together with numerous last names ending in a vowel appearing in Hollywood credits or record labels from the 1950s to today.

In the 1930s, by combining film, radio, press, and theater, Italians discarded the borders of the Little Italies, opening up the geography of the community from the tight limits of Manhattan and the Lower East Side to the area surrounding New York, including New Jersey and Long Island, with excursions to Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago—wherever there were Italian communities. It was through the media that this Neapolitan-Italian American *cultura dello spettacolo* reached a wider Italian audience, paralleling and contrasting the Fascist media effort to Italianize "Italians abroad" with the creation of a unifying language—Napolglish: popular and modern, and yet as ancient as the Neapolitan dialect that constituted its basis—in a synthesis which soon escaped the bounds of the community to be borne on the notes of Louis Prima and Dean Martin.

Italian American Sceneggiate

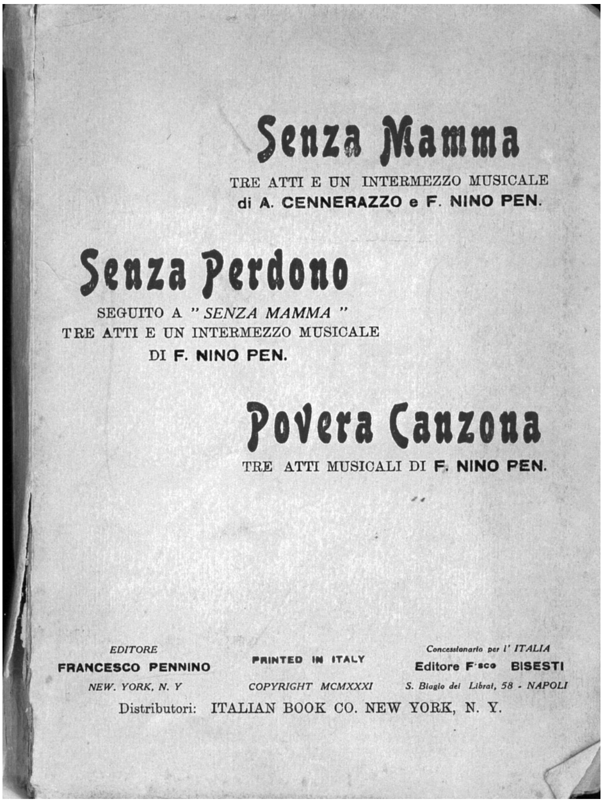
In making their own films, the artists of the Italian immigrant stage adapted traditional formats such as *sceneggiata* and *macchietta* to American situations. These Neapolitan genres were deeply rooted in Italian stage traditions: *macchietta* in commedia dell'arte and *opera buffa*, and the "dramatic song," from which the *sceneggiata* originated, in melodrama. Both used music to convey either popular drama, passion, and participation or irony, social commentary, and the picturesque, as in the case of the *macchietta*. The vivid and euphonic Neapolitan dialect facilitated communication and storytelling and was accessible to the whole community, being the *koinè* of southern Italian popular folk culture.

The *sceneggiata* developed from the Neapolitan dramatic song, *la canzone di giacca* (song in a jacket[75]), which already evoked a theatrical rendering. It had the rhythmic structure of a Spanish serenade or a tango; the lyrics spoke of broken hearts, jealousy, or the vicissitudes of a *guappo* (an arrogant member of the *camorra*), of people wrongly jailed, with tragic endings such as the knifing of a woman who betrayed the hero or of the villainous antagonist. Thus, the dramatic song implied a structured narrative which could easily assume a theatrical (or cinematic) form, based on the traditional Italian combination of singing and acting, as well as that blend of comic and tragic elements which is so essential to Italian performances. *Sceneggiata* became a regular feature on film in 1914 and on the stage in Naples after World War I, and it was immediately taken up in the United States.[76]

Francesco Pennino is considered to be the main composer of *sceneggiate* written in the United States.[77] However, the official publication of his three *sceneggiate*—*Senza Mamma*, *Senza Perdono* (the sequel to *Senza Mamma*), and *Povera Canzona*—reads: "three acts and a musical intermission by A. Cennerazzo and F. Nino Pen," specified on the following page as "three dramatic works taken from the homonymous songs by Francesco Pennino" (fig. 4.5).[78] This wording suggests that Pennino did not write the text of the *sceneggiate*, but the songs that inspired them, while Armando Cennerazzo wrote the "dramatic works."[79] Also, Pennino's choice to sign this publication with the anagram "Nino Pen," suggests a limited involvement in their presentation. But his "authorship" should not be contested since, in the Neapolitan tradition, he would have been considered their author anyway because it was the dramatic song that gave the title and the plot to the *sceneggiata*, as long as the song was already popular, which was the case in this instance.[80] The song "Senza mamma" (Without mother) contained the dramatic story developed in the *sceneggiata*, with a young man in love with a woman who betrays him to marry his friend, forcing him to emigrate and leave his old mother behind. When the man receives the news that his mother has died, he takes a gun and commits suicide, as in a scene of *Godfather II*. This was the only scene in the *sceneggiata* that took place in New York, but it was presented as an *Intermezzo*—a sort of "vision" and not an integral part of the drama: "The curtain goes up. The night is dark and foggy, then slowly you see the sky and the bay, and part of the moon that lights Mt. Vesuvius on one side and, on the other, the skyline of the port of New York . . . then a vision of Peppino sad with a gun in his hand . . . then all disappears. During this vision "Senza mamma" is sung."[81]

The song had a strong narrative, with five characters already established: mother, son, sister, unfaithful girlfriend, and disloyal best friend. The "far away" place where the protagonist fled was not defined but it would have been identified automatically with America. There was also an implicit ending—suicide—given that the final words were "better to die, why should I live?" The song "Senza mamma" had a pleasant melody and spoke to the hearts of many southern Italian men, juxtaposing a passion for a "bad" woman to the sincere and "never dying" love of (and for) Mamma.

In a *Rapporto*—a document probably compiled for copyright purposes—Pennino stated that he had composed the song "Senza mamma" in 1917, in New York, and that he had registered it with the copyright office in Washington. The composition of the song coincides with the Neapolitan development of the dramatic song, while the act of copyright-



Senza Mamma
TRE ATTI E UN INTERMEZZO MUSICALE
di A. CENNERAZZO e F. NINO PEN.

Senza Perdono
SEGUITO A " *SENZA MAMMA* "
TRE ATTI E UN INTERMEZZO MUSICALE
DI F. NINO PEN.

Povera Canzona
TRE ATTI MUSICALI DI F. NINO PEN.

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Figure 4.5. The front cover of the three *sceneggiate*, composed by Francesco Pennino, Francis Coppola's maternal grandfather.

ing it reveals the entrepreneurial attitude Pennino had developed in his twelve years in the United States.

Francis Coppola hid another reference to his maternal grandfather's work in the *Godfather II* sequence, dated 1917: the backdrop depicted an imaginary gulf with Mount Vesuvius, the harbor of Naples, and the Statue of Liberty, visually emphasizing the relationship between the two spaces, for the immigrants, just like the logo of his grandfather's publishing company, Edizioni Pennino and the description of the intermezzo.[82] This evocative image and the song testify to the cultural debt that the contemporary generation of Italian American filmmakers, such as Coppola, acknowledge, with affectionate respect, in reference to the world of the immigrant stage.

Even though all three of Pennino's *sceneggiatas* take place solely in Naples and do not address the condition of emigrants, they are culturally both Neapolitan and American. Thematically, as in a traditional *sceneggiata*, family relations, love, and an act of betrayal or violence dominate the narrative; the drama is excessive, but it coexists with comic touches and is released, in the end, through the dramatic song, which synthetizes the emotions of the audience and performers: all in tears. As authoritative scholar Scialò argues, one of the main roles of the *sceneggiata* was "identity reinforcement," that is, a sort of mirroring of audience and performers' values and feelings in a "neuro-cultural empathy."[83] But underneath the sentimental excesses and fatalism, *Senza Mamma* does express a different vision of the world, elaborated within the immigrant experience, for instance, when Rosa regrets not having finished her studies to become a teacher and having been spoiled by her father. Education and work for women? Not a major preoccupation in Naples at that time, but a problem for the immigrant community. As Cinotto notes, "the psychological stress posed by the circumstances of migration reflected on increasing worries of immigrant males, parents, or religious authorities about the behaviors, mores, and sexuality of women, the continuing loyalty of the second generation, and the solidity of the diasporic family as an institution . . . [gave rise to a] much discussed disinclination to invest in their children's education, especially as far as girls were concerned."[84]

In American *sceneggiatas*, both on stage and in film, the protagonists of the sociogenerational conflict are girls, second-generation Italian women who suffered from the intense tensions within the processes of cultural integration the most.[85] In *Senza Mamma*, Rosa likes nice clothes but is aware of the difference it would make to her life were she to start working. In *Santa Lucia Luntana*, the good girl works and dresses very simply, speaks Neapolitan and is very respectful to her father, while her sister does not work but dances, polishes her nails, and is a cause of anxiety to her father because she stays out late.

An interesting detail, in *Santa Lucia Luntana*, is the absence of the mother: she appears in a huge portrait that the father leaves back in New York, so that she could protect her son—another young Italian American man *senza mamma*, without a mother. Indeed, it is at the feet of this portrait that Mickey, discovering that his family has left for Naples, whispers his first Italian word ("Mamma!") and whistles "'O sole mio," before starting to cry—the beginning of his redemption.

Another *sceneggiata* refers to this "motherless syndrome": *Senza Mamma e 'Nammurata!*, a film made by Neapolitan performers in New York in 1932, an apparent sequel to Pennino's *Senza mamma*.[86] Although he did not compose the song, which was written by Luigi Donadio and published by E. Rossi, a sheet with its lyrics and music is present in the Pennino Collection. Given Pennino's fame in the field, his care in documenting business transactions, and the fact that he did not litigate the ownership of this song, and given that Donadio collaborated on other occasions with the maestro, *Senza mamma e 'Nnammurata*! can be considered an authorized sequel to *Senza mamma*. The two *sceneggiatas* have an important narrative element in common: they end with the suicide of the protagonist—in this case, a woman.

The film *Senza Mamma e 'Nnammurata*! (*Love's Tragedy*) was produced by Angelo De Vito and directed by Harold Godsoe (who also directed the filmed *Santa Lucia Luntana*); Alberto Campobasso authored the script and Giuseppe De Luca wrote the music. Casolaro, another important figure on the Neapolitan scene in New York, was in charge of casting. The plot involves a broken marriage promise, when the young man marries a richer girl, leaving a girlfriend who breaks her mother's heart, having lost both her virginity and her job. The film ends with an article on the newspaper *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* announcing the girl's suicide. The story recalls a Neapolitan *sceneggiata*—it connects weddings, tragic death, and a broken promise but, as in *Santa Lucia Luntana*, *Senza Mamma e 'Nammurata!* focuses on the moment in which the girl loses her job: a loss that seems to be as tragic as having lost her virginity, a "sin" that destroyed her mother, a Neapolitan woman of another generation. Like *Senza mamma*, this *sceneggiata* ends with a suicide: not violence against others, as in the Neapolitan tradition, but against oneself.

If we reconsider the title of one of Pennino's songs, "'A Patria è 'Nata Mamma" (The home-country is another mother), we could propose an arbitrary syllogism: that to be *senza mamma* (the "motherless syndrome") actually signified the desperation of being "*senza patria*," without a motherland. Neapolitans in America may have longed for the motherland, but Italy was in no way "another mother" for emigrants. On the contrary, since the 1890s "the government . . . [had] tried to intervene to stop or reduce the migratory phenomenon. The Italian parliament condemned emigration as 'vile and immoral' and labeled peasants and workers who emigrated as 'deserters' who abandoned their villages, their homes, and their families to plunge into the 'unknown.'"[87]

Fascist Italy tried to suppress the Neapolitan dialect in Neapolitan films in a bid to impose nationalism, and censored the presentation of Neapolitans as poor, dirty, and inclined to crime, because it would picture the failure of the regime's policies.[88] Even Pennino experienced this repression, which also affected Neapolitan music produced and recorded in the United States. The carabinieri in Naples were ordered to confiscate records not only of "Il brigante Musolino," "L'assassinio di Matteotti," "La morte di Sacco e Vanzetti"—songs composed in the United States and politically critical of Italy—but also Pennino's *Senza mamma* and *Senza perdono*, not because they were "subversive" like the other titles, but because they ended in suicide, which was a forbidden topic in Italian media during Fascism.[89]

Still today, the synergy between music and dramaturgy that descended from the traditions of melodrama and *sceneggiata* is a characteristic of Italian American contemporary cinema, found in the operatic atmospheres of Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfathers*, in all of Martin Scorsese's films (most notably in *Casino*[90]), in John Turturro's bizarre working-class musical *Romance and Cigarettes*, and even in the dramatic finale of De Palma's *Redacted*.

Films in Italian Made in New York

After the advent of sound, within a virtuous cycle of supply and demand, impresarios of the New York Italian immigrant stage such as Clemente Giglio, Angelo De Vito, and Rosario Romeo became film producers. Between 1930 and 1932, Italian companies on the East Coast produced films in New York, Newark, and Fort Lee, in the studios where American companies made movies in the early silent period.[91] Their considerable number, and the variety of people they mobilized testify the importance of this phenomenon, which, however, is difficult to study since only a few films have been preserved, and the performers involved in these activities are virtually unknown. These pictures were lost in the generic grouping of "ethnic cinema" because at times they shared both facilities and personnel with other ethnic film productions. They constituted a space for further interaction with other ethnic and national cultures, continuing the tradition developed in the Lower East

Side, first on the immigrant stages and later taken up on radio, where programming assigned different time slots to different ethnicities. This cultural exchange is fundamental because it multiplies the reciprocal influences: indeed, "Americanization" was just one of the cultural processes taking place; other affinities emerged in music bands, vaudeville, and film, especially with Yiddish and African American communities.

Analysis of the plots of these films in the *AFI Catalog* identifies several of them as *sceneggiatas* (while *The Movie Actor* is a compilation of *macchiette*); all of them included songs. In fact, sound set off a musical explosion in cinema, not only with the output of Hollywood musicals in the early 1930s but also in ethnic films.

This experience constituted a cultural translation of (southern) Italian popular theatrical traditions into modern Italian American media products, narratively adapted to the American situation, as well as to American media formats (advertised as "all talking, all singing movies").

SANTA LUCIA LUNTANA

As is often the case in popular culture, the original format of the Neapolitan s*ceneggiata* addressed the conflict between the individual and society in relation to social codes and morality. Tensions between generations are evident in *Santa Lucia Luntana* both in the original *sceneggiata* by De Maio and in the Italian American film version Harold Godsoe directed in New York in 1931. This film, based on the popular Neapolitan song by the same title,[92] was preserved by Scorsese's Film Foundation and is thus one of the few surviving examples of this production. *Santa Lucia Luntana* focuses on a Neapolitan immigrant family in New York facing the Great Depression: Mickey, the prodigal son on the verge of becoming a gangster, Don Ciccio the dedicated parent disenchanted with the American experience, good girl Elena fired by a molester boss, her hyper-Neapolitan fiancée Mario, and the Americanized sister, Elsie, who depends on a rich American boyfriend (fig. 4.6).

The text narrates the experiences of this immigrant family with an almost documentary approach, showing how it was not so easy to make money in the United States, that work really was hard, and that the family risked being broken up—a cautionary tale that was told when the quotas had already reduced the main flow of the southern Italian diaspora.

The film opens with the popular "anthem" of Italian immigration, *Santa Lucia Luntana*, accompanying postcard images of Naples. It then fades to Little Italy, entering a living room, full of young people dancing to American music, in the modest apartment where Don Ciccio lives with his family. Elsie introduces her American boyfriend to her friends. He gives her a shiny bracelet as a birthday present and she, embracing him heartily, scandalizes the older generation. But the merriment is interrupted by a gunshot in the street. An agitated Mickey throws the door open and chases his worried father away shouting, "Shut up, old man." He then proceeds to steal his father's savings, but Don Ciccio defends him. Bitter about what has happened, the old man decides to join Elena and Mario, who are returning home. The film ends with the family singing *Santa Lucia Luntana*

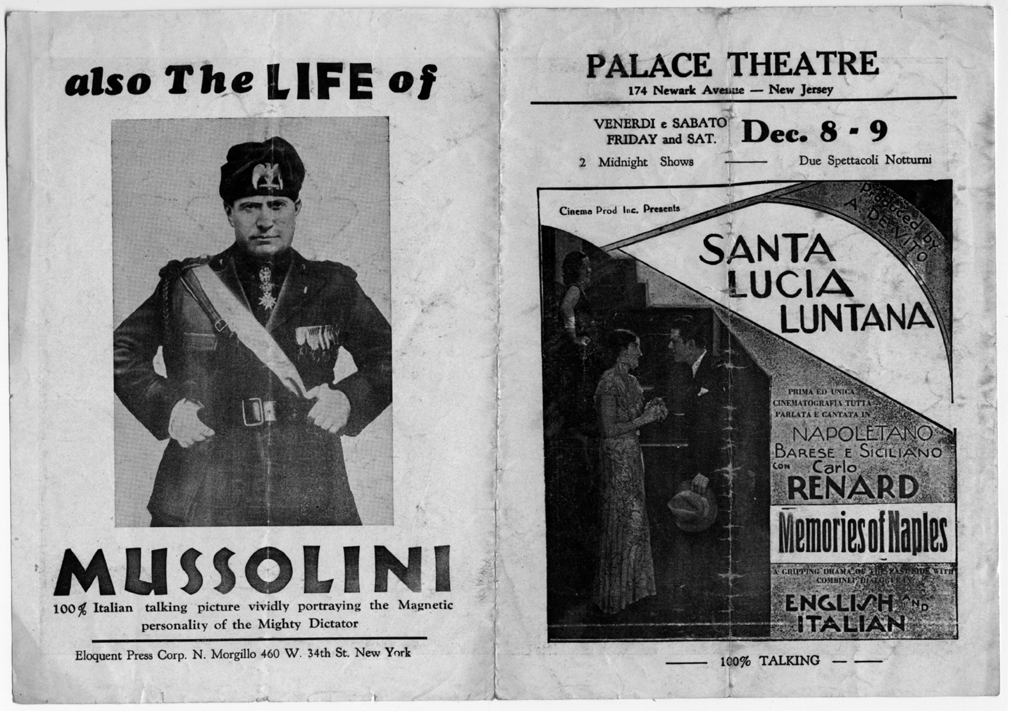

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FIGURE 4.6. *Santa Lucia luntana* (aka *The Immigrant* and *Memories of Naples*) was a popular film *sceneggiata* made in New York, on this occasion screened with a documentary on the life of Mussolini. (Courtesy of the George Eastman Museum.)

together and closing the circle back in Naples. Leaving aside the dream-like quality of the staging of this happy ending, this Italian American *sceneggiata* focuses on returning both culturally (as a *sceneggiata*) and narratively, by going back to Naples. And the dream of returning home was not a mere feeling, but an actual choice—as stated earlier, between 1860 and 1950 returns amounted to half of the total emigration from Italy (reaching 63 percent in the decade from 1910 to 1920).[93]

In addition to the song "Santa Lucia Luntana," the film's soundtrack includes "'O Sole mio,"[94] at two very symbolic moments: on the liner in New York, associated with the image of the Italian flag, when Don Ciccio is returning home with Elena and Mario, and back in the apartment, when Mickey learns that the family has left and whistles "'O Sole mio" to his (dead) mother's portrait, which Don Ciccio has left behind so as to offer him her protection. A metonymic process connects the Neapolitan song to Italy, in the image of the flag and in the portrait of the mother, which symbolizes the "motherland."[95] Once more "Napoli" is a synecdoche of Italy—one that emphasizes also the absence (the death) of the mother.

From a cultural point of view, these Italian American films are Neapolitan *sceneggiate* made in America: the characters speak (and sing) in Neapolitan, but the narrative deals with the immigrant experience, adding new dimensions to the generational conflict. "Chista è l'Ammerica!" (This is America!) Don Ciccio comments as he watches his daughter dance to modern music. But America is also hard work: Don Ciccio and Elena get up at the crack of dawn and return home exhausted. Even Elena's reason to return home is not only sentimental, since she has been unfairly sacked and is unemployed. The work ethic is a new theme for a *sceneggiata*, and emphasizes the values of the Italian American community, which aspires to make honest money and accepts hard work.

Santa Lucia Luntana documents *la questione della lingua* in the United States in its very use of languages. Don Ciccio laments, in Neapolitan: "America is the land of wealth and happiness. But for whom?" and "This land took away everything from me: youth, energy, strength and maybe even dignity." Indeed, bitter comments are expressed in Neapolitan (or Italian) not in English, as if the filmmakers intended that they should be understood by the less assimilated immigrants, excluding the second generation of immigrants, the Americanized Italians (and American audiences).

The two "bad children" are always called by their Anglicized names, Elsie and Mickey; they speak English and seem to have been seduced by the American way of life, which is symbolized by the modern music of the first scene, easy money (the bracelet, the father's savings that Mickey steals) and violence (the gunshot in the street). America also produces disrespect for parents and cultural traditions: the good daughter Elena not only prefers Neapolitan music but speaks Neapolitan with her boyfriend and is respectful to her father, even though she recognizes his limits, his "softness."

Italian American culture clashed with Americanization on the very issue of the family, given that the early 1930s coincided not only with the Great Depression but also with the coming of age of the second generation of immigrants. As Ester Romeyn notes in her work on Neapolitan performer Farfariello, "home" was what defined the boundaries of Italian American culture.[96] "*La casa*" was contrasted with the United States, a place of "loose morals," where the values of "*l'ordine di famiglia*," the order of the family, indeed its very existence, were endangered. Many immigrants feared the lure of going the "American Way," which meant discarding traditional family values and placing individual self-interest above the interests of the family as a unit. First and second immigrant generations clashed over matters that concerned the continuity of the family and, therefore, over women: relations between the sexes, dating, courtship, and marriage. As the character of Mario reminds his fiancée in the film, these were traditionally family affairs that needed to be closely monitored. In times of rapid sociocultural transformation, worsened by the Great Depression, individuals tended to become increasingly sensitive to the disjunction between their public and private selves. This process provoked deep apprehensions about the proper and competent performance of these new, or transformed, social roles. Through its melodramatic narrative, *Santa Lucia Luntana* achieves the notable result of an articulate and non-Manichean representation of these conflicts.

The dialogue in the film is in Italian, English, and Neapolitan, with a touch of various southern Italian dialects but does not create a babel; on the contrary, it shows a community that naturally uses and understands several languages, although it maintains Neapolitan as the mother tongue. The film offers a description of the processes of constructing an Italian American identity, of preserving Italian cultural roots and values while interacting with American culture. The plot and the acting style of *Santa Lucia Luntana* evoke

Neapolitan popular theater, but the young women dress and dance like American girls, even though the film closes on a very traditional rendering of the title song.

The representational strategies of *Santa Lucia Luntana* recall the realist traditions of Neapolitan cinema as well as the simple *mise-en-scène* of popular theater.[97] They alternate the modest furniture of the apartment with the busy harbor of New York, where the immigrants, all dressed up, take a liner to return home, and with the idealized painted backdrop of the Neapolitan villa with the family group of the ending—Naples as the dream, and New York as the harsh reality.

The director of *Santa Lucia Luntana* was Harold Godsoe,[98] but the direction of the actors was credited to Orazio Cammi, the interpreter of "black sheep" Mickey. Thus, the American director performed the technical work, while the actors were entrusted to *capocomico* Cammi, a very active actor-impresario-director from Little Italy as well as the author of popular religious dramas performed both on stage and on radio.[99] In the film, Cammi uses a conventional acting style, typical of the *sceneggiata*, different from the naturalism of Don Ciccio-Raffaele Bongini, revealing the variety of styles and options available within immigrant theater. In fact, Bongini came from the prestigious *Teatro d'Arte* of New York, led by Giuseppe Sterni, an influential representative of Italian legitimate theater in America. Bongini's career overlapped with other important experiences on the immigrant stage, such as the *Compagnia Drammatica Siciliana Aguglia-Cecchini*; he also appeared in prestigious silent films, such as *Humming Bird*, with Gloria Swanson and William Ricciardi, and in *A Sainted Devil*, with Valentino and Nita Naldi.

COSÌ È LA VITA AND OTHER TITLES

The setting of the other *sceneggiata* films was not New York but Italy: indeed, most ethnic films made in the United States in the early 1930s, such as Ulmer's *The Girl from Poltavia*, did not address immigrant life but the homeland and its traditions (songs, legends, or typical narrative situations), which makes *Santa Lucia Luntana* and *Senza Mamma 'e Nnammurata* even more interesting.

Così è la vita (Life is like that), produced by Thalia Amusements with Eduardo Ciannelli and Miriam Battista, was completed one month before *Santa Lucia Luntana* at the same Fort Lee Metropolitan Studios. Armando Cennerazzo, the dramatist of Pennino's *Senza Mamma*, wrote the script, the story of a man who leaves Naples on a business trip to the United States, while an aristocratic friend of the family seduces his lonely wife, who has an illegitimate son. Therefore, the setting was not the "lower" urban world of the *sceneggiata*, but the rich and (apparently) modern Neapolitan middle class, bound to the United States not through emigration but by business trips. The presence of illegitimate children in these films seems to suggest the fear of changing sexual mores. Taking into account the mother/motherland metaphor however, these figures also express the feeling of not being legitimate sons and daughters of Italy.

Italian American actress Miriam Battista (New York, 1912–1980) made her on-screen comeback playing Immacolata; she had been a child star both on Broadway and in silent cinema. Her filmography included Capellani's *Eye for Eye* (1919) as Nazimova's little Arab sister, Borzage's *Humoresque* (1920) as the Jewish little girl loved by the protagonist, and Franklin's *Smilin' Through* (1922) as Norma Talmadge's little sister. In *Boomerang Bill* (Tom Terriss, 1922), she played a Chinese girl next to Lionel Barrymore. These films show Miriam Battista as the Italian American actress with the greatest visibility in American silent cinema. That she was just a girl and did not play Italian characters confirms the casting parameters Hollywood adopted for Italian actresses in the silent era. However, she did play relevant characters, with her dark eyes peeping out of the screen and the raven curls more associated with a southern Italian girl. (In these same years, beautiful Mimì Aguglia had only one small, uncredited, role in American silent cinema, either because she was not interested in film or, perhaps, because American cinema was not yet ready for such a seductive Italian actress, given the sexual fears aroused by female migrants.) Battista's filmic comeback in the 1930s did not go unnoticed. Reviewing the film, the *Film Daily* (November 8, 1931) noted: "She reveals a fine singing voice," confirming the omnipresence of songs in these films.

With the community's scarce familiarity with filmmaking, these projects tried to involve anybody who had had professional experience in the field, including silent film veterans such as Battista and Bongini. The former child star also had the small role of Molly, Elena's friend, in *Santa Lucia Luntana*. In 1933, she was the protagonist of a minor American picture, *Enlighten Thy Daughter*, a musical set in a college for rich girls and, that same year, she was on stage in *Our Wife* with Humphrey Bogart. After 1933, however, she no longer appears in any relevant roles, neither on stage nor on screen.

It is not clear what role Eduardo Ciannelli played in *Così è la vita*; at that time, he was still working on Broadway, albeit the barriers between the immigrant stage, the American theater, and Hollywood evidently had started to crumble.

The above-mentioned *Senza Mamma e 'Nammurata!* was produced at the RCA Sound Studios (fig. 4.7). Rosina De Stefano, a popular Neapolitan singer on the New York scene, who had already recorded the title song in 1927, played the role of Matalena, the mother; Catherine Campagnone, the winner of the 1932 Miss Italy New York contest, played Maria. While the film utilized the traditional themes and formats of a Neapolitan *sceneggiata*, it also constituted an example of the modernization of Italian show business practices, from synergy with the musical scene to beauty pageants.

Amore e morte (Love and death) was produced and directed by impresario and radio star Rosario Romeo with Aurora Film. The *AFI Catalog* defines it as a "rural melodrama with songs." It is set in Sicily at the end of the nineteenth century and the dialog is in Sicilian (and Italian) with English subtitles. The film received considerable attention in the American press. On October 6, 1932, the *Film Daily* published a positive review, which gives an idea of its (confused) plot: "The story is about a rich landowner, played by Romeo, whose chief joy in life is a young daughter. One of the employees, abandoning his wife and children, has an affair with the girl and gets her into trouble. When her father learns about it, he flies into a mad rage, causing the daughter to die from fright. The girl's despoiler is then killed by lightning just as he is being pursued by the father seeking vengeance. Some native songs and a slight bit of comedy are interpolated" (fig. 4.8). The *New York Times* (October 4, 1932) was impressed with the scenery and locations, which transformed the

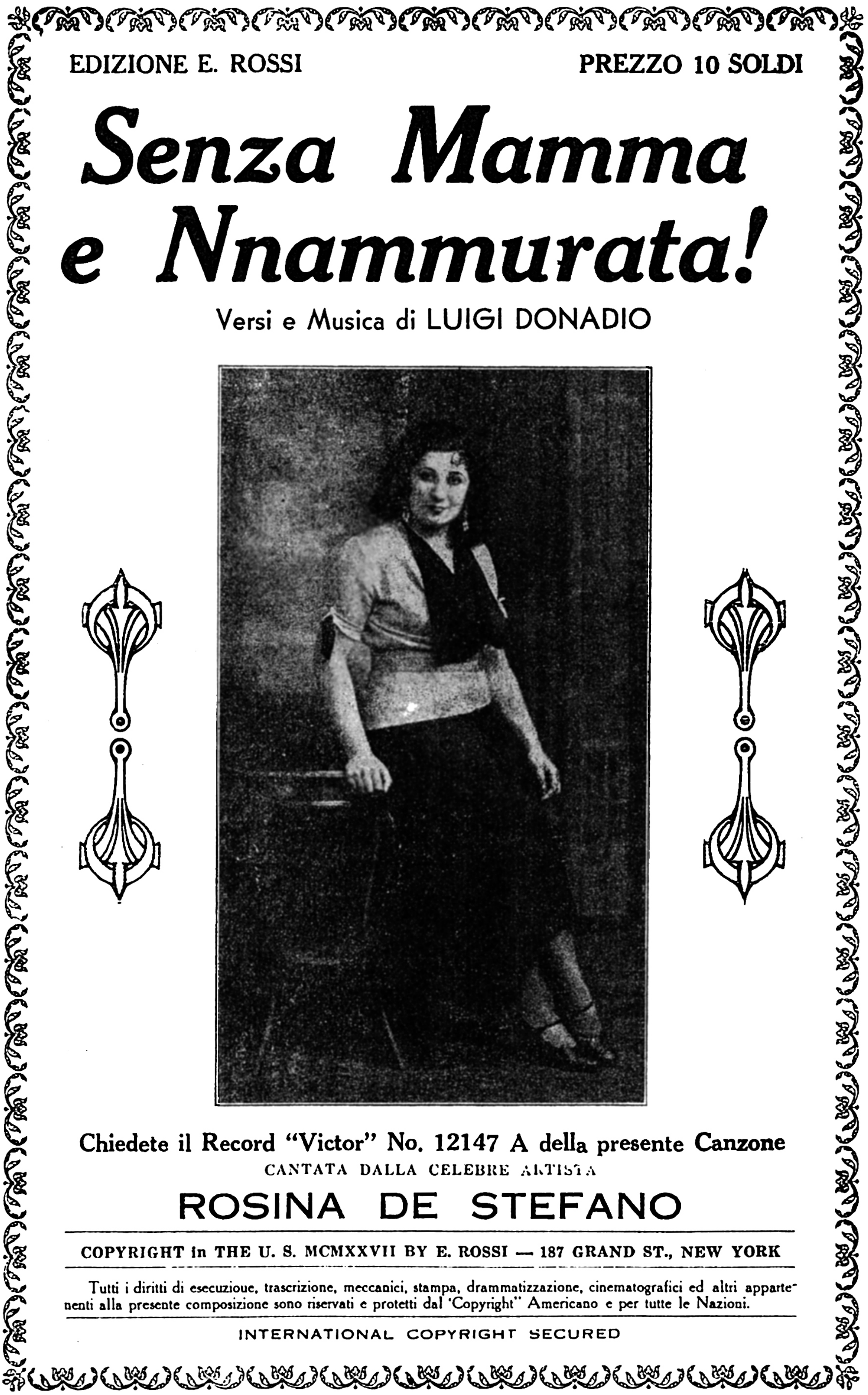

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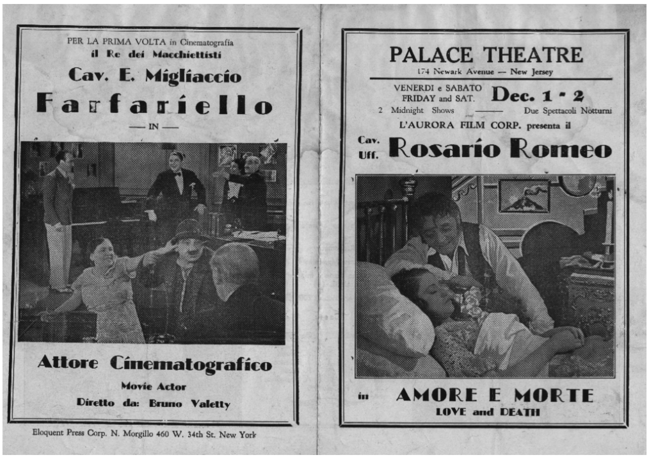
Figure 4.7. The dramatic song, source of this Italian American film of the same title, was an authorized sequel to Pennino's *Senza Mamma*. (Courtesy of the George Eastman Museum.)



PER LA PRIMA VOLTA in Cinematografia
il Re dei Macchiettisti
Cav. E. Migliaccio
Farfariello
— IN —

Attore Cinematografico
Movie Actor
Diretto da: Bruno Valetty

Eloquent Press Corp. N. Morgillo 460 W. 34th St. New York

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Cav. Uff. Rosario Romeo

in AMORE E MORTE
LOVE and DEATH

Figure 4.8. Aurora Productions advertises its two films made in New Jersey, *The Movie Actor* with Farfariello (1932) and Rosario Romeo's Sicilian drama *Amore e morte* (1931). (Courtesy of the George Eastman Museum.)

New Jersey landscape into a "striking illusion of the approaches to Etna in Eastern Sicily."[100] By contrast, *Variety* (October 4, 1932) trashed *Amore e morte* and its amateurish production with a trace of anti-Italian sentiment: "Italian patrons in the US are notoriously fond of bad pictures: the worse the film, from the technical, acting and story standpoint, the better the Italian customers like 'em. Here's a new low ebb for them." The cast included several performers from Sterni's *Teatro d'Arte*, including Raffaele Bongini, who regularly performed on the radio with director Rosario Romeo. The star of *Amore e morte*, Clara Diana, was an Italian American girl from the Bronx, selected for the role through a beauty contest, as in the case of *Senza Mamma e' Nnammurata!*

Amore e morte opened at the Selwyn Theatre in Times Square, perhaps with the ambition of conquering non-Italian audiences too. The premiere included *The Movie Actor* with Farfariello, another Aurora production, thus offering a full southern Italian program of *sceneggiatas* and *macchiettas*. Like the other films in this group, *Amore e morte* was not screened in Italy, at least not on a national scale and in official theaters.

Amor in montagna was a melodrama full of music in which Selvaggia and Tonio live their tortured love story in the Catskill mountains, where Countess Giraldi, in her elegant villa, discovers that her illegitimate son, believed to be dead, is one of the guests: popular opera or pretentious *sceneggiata*? The *Film Daily* (March 17, 1932) reported: "*Love in the Mountains* . . . will have its premiere Sunday at the Fifth Avenue theater. The stars will appear in person at the first showing in a dramatic sketch." It was not unusual to find this combination of live performance and film, still in the 1930s; as already stated, Italian companies maintained this intermedia approach (radio, stage, and film) well into the 1940s, when in most immigrant theaters it had disappeared.

Italians on the East Coast also tried their hand at some prestigious productions based on opera or inspired by historical spectacles. *Pagliacci*, produced by Audio Film in Long Island, featured the Italian American San Carlo Opera Company, directed by popular impresario Fortune Gallo. In this meta opera, a troupe is to perform in the famous melodrama by Leoncavallo but ends up involved in a similar plot of jealousy. The film, starring Alba Novella, had a special premiere at the Central Park Theatre, purportedly with the participation of New York's Mayor, Jimmy Walker.[101] This was the only film from this group that received distribution and appreciative reviews in Italy, probably because of its higher cultural profile.[102]

Another production with high cultural ambitions was the historical spectacle *Genoveffa*, directed and interpreted by Giulio Amauli, a popular artist on Italian-language radio. It was an adaptation of *Genoveffa di Brabante*, a Teutonic poem on the life of "Saint" Genevieve. Sexy scenes of seduction, knights fighting, servants betraying masters, and the odd miracle made it a peculiar religious subject, spiced with attractive narrative elements that ensured its popularity, not only with Catholic communities.

Shot at Lambert's Castle, in Paterson New Jersey, and at the Newark Motion Picture Studio, with few but intelligently used means, *Genoveffa* was "more technically sophisticated than the typical low-budget productions."[103] The battle scenes were taken from an Italian silent film on the same subject, according to a review in the *Film Daily* (August 22, 1932). The film had good production standards and was still popular in the mid-1930s, as documented by its recurring presence in the Ruggieri programs. In this case, the main cultural reference, in addition to the ancient poem, was the prestigious genre of the Italian historical film, which had been the main asset in the export of Italian silent cinema. The quality of production allowed *Genoveffa* to access international circulation too: it was distributed in Spain (and perhaps from there in Latin America).[104]

Information about the other titles is very scarce, and at times quite ambiguous. *Piccola mamma*, for instance, is a feature film directed by Orazio Cammi, the artistic director of *Santa Lucia Luntana*, distributed by Marconi Film in New York, and advertised as an "Italian Talkie"[105] but it is not mentioned in the *AFI Catalog*, which instead lists *La porta del destino* (Lewis Maisell) as a "film in Italian language" but does not offer any release date. An article in the *Film Daily* (September 8, 1931) announced a project with a slightly different title (*Le porte del destino*): "[A]n Italian feature written by Angelo De Vito, will start production tomorrow at the Metropolitan studios, Fort Lee. It will be directed by Lewis Maisell and will be entirely in Italian dialogue. S. Dura and Yolanda Carluccio will be featured." De Vito was the producer of *Senza Mamma e 'Nnammurata*, and Carluccio was among the actors of *Santa Lucia Luntana*, so it is plausible that a project with such a title existed, but it is hard to know if the film was actually made.

Other cases were synchronizations of silent films, such as *Parigi affascina*, an Italian sound version of the American silent *The Masked Lover* (1928). This type of product also bears witness to the superimposition between film producers and film theater managers, who could retain prints of films they showed and synchronize them with sound. This seems to be the case with *'O festino e 'a legge*, produced by Clemente and Sandrino Giglio. This "drama with songs" has the same title as a popular *sceneggiata* film by Elvira Notari, distributed in the United States by Dora Film. Since the film is lost, evidence for this supposition is found in the text of two songs, summarized by the *AFI Catalog*. The first compares a trip by ferryboat in the Bay of New York to one in the Bay of Naples: skyscrapers take the visual place of the Vesuvius. It is a welcome for compatriots returning to the United States, and thus contextualizes the subsequent story as reaching New York from Naples. In fact, narrative framing devices were often used in early ethnic sound films by adding a prologue announcing a legend or event which happened in the old country and splicing it together with a silent film on that story. The other song tells of a woman stabbed on the night of her wedding, which is, in fact, the plot of the original *'O festino e 'a legge*. Sound permitted the reuse of silent "musical" films, such as those produced by Notari, which until then had either been screened with live performances or records. (In this instance, the Roberto Ciaramella company had already recorded the *sceneggiata 'O festino e 'a legge* at Columbia, in New York).

In the early 1930s, the synergy between the record and music industries and the immigrant stage community grew stronger, targeting both the immigrant market and the Neapolitan public. This interaction of songs, artists, and transnational experiences makes identification of these media products in terms of "national identity" quite ambiguous as it points instead toward a nongeographic "Neapolitanness," both transatlantic and cosmopolitan.

The introduction of sound encouraged other studios on the Hudson to resume film production and to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Broadway stage and the immigrant theater in New York. For instance, the resurrected Ideal studio hosted the filming of RKO's *Nick and Tony*, an Italian American series, initially with Nick Basil and Polish actor Tony Martin; the latter was soon replaced by Henry Armetta. The *Film Daily* of October 5, 1930, reviewed an episode in the shorts section:

> "Society Goes Spaghetti" with Henry Armetta and Nick Basil.
>
> A rip-roaring wop comedy in Lou Brock's *Nick and Tony* series. The duo, one a balloon peddler and the other as a dealer in statuettes [*figurinaio*], help to return a lost child and as a reward they are invited to dinner. A spaghetti burlesque follows with plenty of laughs interspersed. . . . A chase scene, culminating in the blowup of the dinner part, ends in the cop falling overboard and the two wops catching a boat for their sunny Italy. Tony Armetta [*sic*] and Nick Basil do swell work, aided by good direction, and the number has amusement appeal for a wide class.

There is no comment on the heavy hand in stereotyping and the underlying prejudices; what is evident is that Italian immigrant performers such as Armetta and Basil either cannot intervene or are not aware of the offensive nature of this representation on the part of American filmmakers. This makes the attempt of other Italian immigrant artists to take their own representation on screen into their own hands, by producing films themselves, even more important.

Dusty attics and archive shelves probably hide other examples of films in Italian made in New York, but this overview already offers a diversified map of a consistent media production.

FARFARIELLO IN *THE MOVIE ACTOR*

The Movie Actor has recently emerged from oblivion too. It is a short, featuring *macchiettista* Eduardo Migliaccio, alias Farfariello. Italian American cinephile director Martin Scorsese, who grew up on Elizabeth Street right next to the stages where the Neapolitan artist performed, sponsored the restoration of the film through the Film Foundation.

A notable critical and textual corpus of documentation concerning Frafariello favored his rediscovery, at least in Italian American Studies, making a detailed discussion of his biography unnecessary here.[106]

In *The Movie Actor*, Farfariello, looking for a film role, enters Aurora Film, Romeo's film company, and sings a Neapolitan song, but the impresario (Raffaele Bongini) tells him that the studio only engages "tipi," character types. Farfariello then exits but reenters each time made up as one of his famous impersonations: Mademoiselle Fifi, a chanteuse, who sings *in falsetto* and lifts her skirt, winking at the maestro; an arrogant gangster (*racchettiere*), who extolls his *mitragliatrice* (machine gun) and shoots his *rivoltella* (pistol) to signal his intentions; and a *cafone*, an ignorant emigrant, unable to adapt to American language and manners, who performs the famous poem *A' Lingua 'taliana*, on the notes of *'O Sole Mio*, transformed into "Che bella cosa la lingua 'taliana," (What a beautiful thing Italian language is) which accompanies the text in a perfect rhythmic match. Once again, Italian and Neapolitan are fused metonymically in the use of both the most famous Neapolitan song and the text, and by the very poem, which celebrates the Italian language but uses Neapolitan (fig. 4.9).

The short is meta communicative and rich in self-irony, making fun of the two dominant stereotypes of southern Italians—the ignorant *paisano* and the gangster—and building up a gripping tempo, while documenting Farfariello's ability as a *trasformista* (quick-change artist) and the empathic humor that made him so popular. The joke "Aggiufatt a

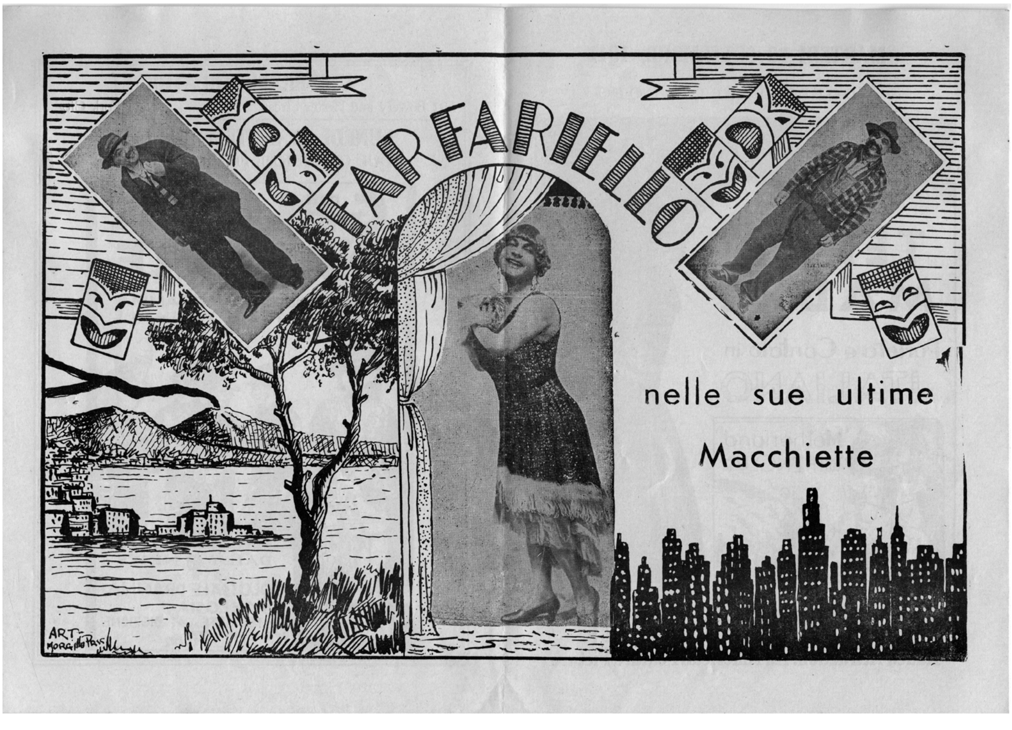


Figure 4.9. A promotional image for Farfariello's *macchiette*. (Courtesy of the George Eastman Museum.)

’merica” (I’ve made it in America, that is, I’ve succeeded, I’ve made it big) in close up, ends the performance, repeating one of his most famous lines: a line that could be a collective statement for this group of performers.

Farfariello’s characterizations go beyond *macchietta*, with his colorful but nonstereotypical gestures, revealing a creativity not limited to merely repeating the original formats, but able to reinvent their communicative force in a different context: “colonial theater.” He focused on issues from daily life: problems at work, generational or gender conflicts, regional and national identity, working on the question of language, and his highly original contribution to the creation of an Italian American jargon—Napolglish.

The fact that Migliaccio had a middle-class background played an important role in his *macchiette coloniali*, since he saw his activities as an entertainer as having a didactic element too. He once said, “Would it not be a good thing, by highlighting his paltry figure in so many cases, to open the mind of our immigrant?”[107]

Italian critics appreciated Migliaccio for his repertoire that, according to De Mura, “recalled a distant homeland, that he loved with the same passion as his valiant brother, General Teodorico Migliaccio.”[108] Affirmations of his *Italianità* emerge often in his profiles in the Italian press, which presented him as an exemplary “Italian abroad” who was even appreciated by the regime. Indeed, in 1936, King Vittorio Emanuele III awarded him a knighthood, with the title *Cavaliere* in appreciation of his gifts as a performer but also for his “moral leadership” in the colonial world. A careful reading of his work, however, would suggest a more variable support for nationalist values: at times Farfariello comments ironically on the patriotic rhetoric of the *maggiorenti*, showing off with their swords and fancy hats, while he always took the part of the migrants, out of line with both Italian and American “anti”-attitudes.

His *macchiette* made the audience laugh, with empathy, at the difficulties southern Italian migrants had to face in the United States and at their reactions, revealing the cultural resistance of the community to assimilation. Farfariello’s work also demonstrated the lingering influence of a traditional Neapolitan format such as *macchietta*. He created a unique form of expression, which would be long lived, going on to leave its mark in the “funny” language of Little Italy and later in the songs of Jimmy Durante, Louis Prima, Lou Monte, Dean Martin, and Floyd Vivino.

With his work on language, changing gender roles, and class distinction and his ability to link his impersonations with the cultural issues facing the community in the diaspora, Farfariello played a crucial function in facilitating the adjustment of southern immigrants of various origins to the novelty of the New World. However, by stressing miscommunication and linguistic subordination, he ends up refusing linguistic discipline and assimilation in favor of a liberating laugh. He transforms the cultural humiliation of “an unassimilated stranger in America and an uneducated Southerner in Italy” into a nonlinear progression from immigrant to ethnic American into a pride-inspiring attitude, which must be the reason of the continuity of this tradition and culture.[109]

Strangely enough, with the advent of sound, Farfariello, who had made this film in New York, did not go (nor was he called) to Hollywood. Instead he started a successful program as Don Leopoldo at radio WOW. Perhaps the East Coast Italian immigrant scene was still so full of opportunities in the traditional outlets of stage and radio, and in autochthonous film production, that he could see no reason to move. Perhaps the limited linguistic integration of these performers could explain Hollywood's hesitation in using them, even though the hybrid form of the Marx Brothers with Chico speaking with a heavy Italian American accent was very popular at the time. Furthermore, Hollywood already had in its ranks the quite successful Italian American performer Jimmy Durante, a "comic" singer, who played with language and music in a form similar to Farfariello's *macchiette*.

Indeed, Migliaccio was not the only *macchiettista* to be successful abroad: Berardo Cantalamessa, who had been quite popular in Naples when he recorded *'A Risa* (Laughter), a Neapolitan version of an Afro-American tune, successfully toured America and then moved to Buenos Aires. As Carnevale argues, "an analysis of Farfariello's material requires a consideration of the meanings and functions of language humor along with the role of popular cultural forms such as the variety theatre in the construction of ethnic identity."[110]

Information about these films is scarce: who financed them? How were they made and distributed? Did they circulate only on the East Coast or did they also reach the West Coast, Latin America, or regionalist Italy? The casts and plots indicate that they were closer to the cultural traditions of the Neapolitan stage and Italian cinema than to Hollywood. The actors were local celebrities, suggesting that the implicit target audience was in Little Italy; in fact, they were released in New York, which was, at that time, the biggest Italian city in the world.

From the point of view of Italian film history, American films made in Italian represent an important element, with at least seventeen feature titles (plus shorts) produced between 1930 and 1932, but they went totally unnoticed.

These films represent a specific moment within Italian American culture in the early 1930s, related to the introduction of sound and to the historical context (Fascism and the Great Depression) and, consequently, to coming to terms with interrelated linguistic and identity issues. In this phase, Italian immigrant performers developed a new awareness with regard to the use of Italian as a "dignified" alternative to dialect and to American linguistic assimilation, yet they performed in Napolglish.

"The talkies" and the radio offered new communicative opportunities to ethnic communities, especially Italians, with their musical vocation. They proposed a popular production, made up of *sceneggiatas* and *macchiettas*, which were by then largely absent in Italy due to the Fascist clampdown on regional culture. Rather than simply preserving their culture, migrants innovated it, as isolation tends to force cultures to find new ways of expression and to utilize media creatively.

These works allowed the immigrant community to work through the loss they felt from departure and their fears of modern life in the New World. They document the original culture the Italians of the diaspora created, as modern as it was traditional, ranging from tragedy to comedy, but always with a rich musical vein.

Italian Radio in the United States

Italian American radio (and film) functioned as a synthesis of the immigrant experiences in the world of *spettacolo*, benefitting from the expertise and culture developed on the immigrant stage. Falling somewhere between the public and the private spheres, radio connected the immigrant family with the (American) world of consumption through commercial sponsorship, and with political communications that, in the era of the New Deal and Fascism, were invading the airwaves. Italian broadcasting stations were part of the commercial American system, organized within the national networks in a plurality of local stations, often with a marked ethnic stamp.

At the political level, Italian radio channels in the United States constituted a varied group. There was an official Italian radio, broadcast in America on short wave by the Italian EIAR from Prato Smeraldo in Rome. Built in 1930, and upgraded in 1938, this system aimed to reach five million "Italians abroad" to establish contact and to transmit propaganda in order to influence relations with the United States and contrast anti-Fascist messages. The official Italian radio broadcast news and music and, at times, Fascist "conversations," as well as Mussolini's speeches. The regime also broadcast official news through the *Agenzia Stefani*, the national news agency which was provided to newspapers and local radio stations.

Rather than creating a specific "Italian radio" in America, the regime financed some local commercial stations either directly or through the supply of cultural programs for broadcast. Among the Italian American stations that sympathized with the Fascist regime, Stefano Luconi identifies KROW in San Francisco (with the journalist Ettore Patrizi, *direttore* of the newspaper *L'Italia*) along with several New York stations, including WOV and WHOM, radio WCOP in Boston, and WRAX in Philadelphia.[111] These stations offered programs typical of American commercial radio of the time, but with a Fascist point of view on political issues. They looked after Italy's interests among the immigrants, for instance, organizing fundraising campaigns such as *oro alla patria*, asking the community to donate gold to the homeland to support the autarchic system (and the imperial effort).

Anti-Fascist radio was lively too, and could count on such popular personalities as Fiorello La Guardia, a politician but also a successful entertainer; Arturo Giovannitti, who mobilized the Italian segment of the American working class; Luigi Antonini, the leader of Local 89, the textile workers' union; and Charles Fama, who spoke out against Fascism on the WHAP station in New York. Throughout the 1930s, Italians in the United States could access the entire political spectrum by listening to the radio. Given the generally low level of literacy among most immigrants, the radio, together with the Fascist/Italian (LUCE) newsreels, kept the community in close contact with events in Italy. Some commercial radio stations such as WOV and WHOM in New York even opened their broadcasts using Fascist songs *Giovinezza* and *Faccetta nera* as their theme tunes. At times, it was the sponsor who imposed pro-Fascist attitudes: for example, the Parodi Cigar Company forced radio WOV to hire Giovanni Favonio di Giura, president of the New York section of the Fascist League of North America. However, the importance of the two New York radio stations, the profiles of the personnel, and, above all, the diversification of the programs, advises caution before labeling them as openly Fascists, considering, among other things, that the borderline between Italian nationalism and Fascism was not that clear-cut at the time, especially abroad.

In 1930, Radio WRAX began broadcasting in Philadelphia, where there was a large Italian community. It was an ethnic commercial station, broadcasting in English and Italian and offering language classes. Among its sponsors was San Giorgio Macaroni which produced soap operas in Italian along with stage versions of the same dramas in the local theaters. In order to attend these live performances, people had to prove that they had bought at least two packs of San Giorgio spaghetti. But in 1942, the Neapolitan Ralph Borrelli, who introduced Italian programs, was arrested and interned as a Fascist sympathizer.

Angelo and Rose Fiorani ran the mining community radio station in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Fiorani was a tenor and, together with his wife Rose and Lodovico Caminita, the director of Scranton's Italian paper *Il Minatore*, produced the *Italian American Variety Program* on radio WGBI, with music, songs, and comic sketches. The commercial factor was again connected to the political and social world of the community; those who advertised on the radio could also advertise, for free, in the local newspaper. During the process of network integration, this station became affiliated with CBS, but the Fioranis continued broadcasting in Italian. Sponsors and advertisers were either Italian (for example, Fernet Branca and Ferro China Bisleri) or Italian Americans (Conte Luna Macaroni Products or small local entrepreneurs). The pro-Fascist leanings of the station emerged in the news programs.

These characteristics of commercial Italian radio in the United States reveal the speed of the process of modernization in the realm of both communications and food production. In the 1930s, New York Italian radio stations were sponsored by Paramount spaghetti, Macaroni Roma, Ronzoni pasta, Medaglia d'Oro caffè, Lazzara bread, and several olive oil brands, including Ali D'Italia, Mamma Mia, and Buon Pranzo. Radio and the food industry were instances of modernization carried out in line with tradition: the performers were drawn from the immigrant theater, and the food producers supplied the main ingredients of (southern) Italian cuisine. In fact, by the 1930s, brands with Italian names used traditional recipes within an industrial process. Pasta, olive oil, and peeled tomatoes became available both on the immigrant market and at a national level. In the same way as their features and accents made Italian performers and their Italianness visible and audible to American audiences through radio and the "talkies," so too, US food stores made Italian cuisine products available to their American clientele.[112]

Attachment to tradition can also be discerned in the way in which theatrical families—active on stage, in cinema, on the radio, and in the music industry—were organized. Their simultaneous experiences in entertainment would be visualized in alternate editing, since they took place contemporaneously, but in different fields. The same performers appeared in Italian films made in the United States, as well as in the MLVs in Hollywood but also on radio and on the stages of Little Italy in New York City or North Beach in San Francisco. They reached different audiences, interacted with diverse cultures and media, and gradually became more integrated within the American media world.

Italian commercial radio had a prominent place in US broadcast entertainment programs—music, drama, soaps, and sitcoms. As Christopher Newton points out, "[Italian

Americans produced] original material that would air twelve hours a day for the entire week on stations such as radio WOW. Frequently, material would be recorded and sent on a circuit to be aired on local stations in New York, Boston, Detroit, and Chicago."[113] The Italian peculiarity was that the same soaps, comedies, or radio dramas were often performed live on stage too. During the Great Depression, American theater underwent a deep crisis, which annihilated many popular formats, while radio and cinema offered a welcome alternative for performers. Thanks to the radio, the Italian immigrant theater did not decline at that time; indeed, it flourished, widening its public because radio brought new audiences into the theaters. Actor/singer Mario Badolati even presented the final episode of a radio series *only* on stage.[114]

Farfariello, as fortune-teller Don Leopoldo, became a radio star, broadcasting at WHOM in New Jersey, and continuing his work on language, both through social commentary and entertainment. Radio was the ideal medium to propose and confirm a model of identity, of Italian Americanness, since it used the languages, music, and theatrical traditions of the diasporic community.

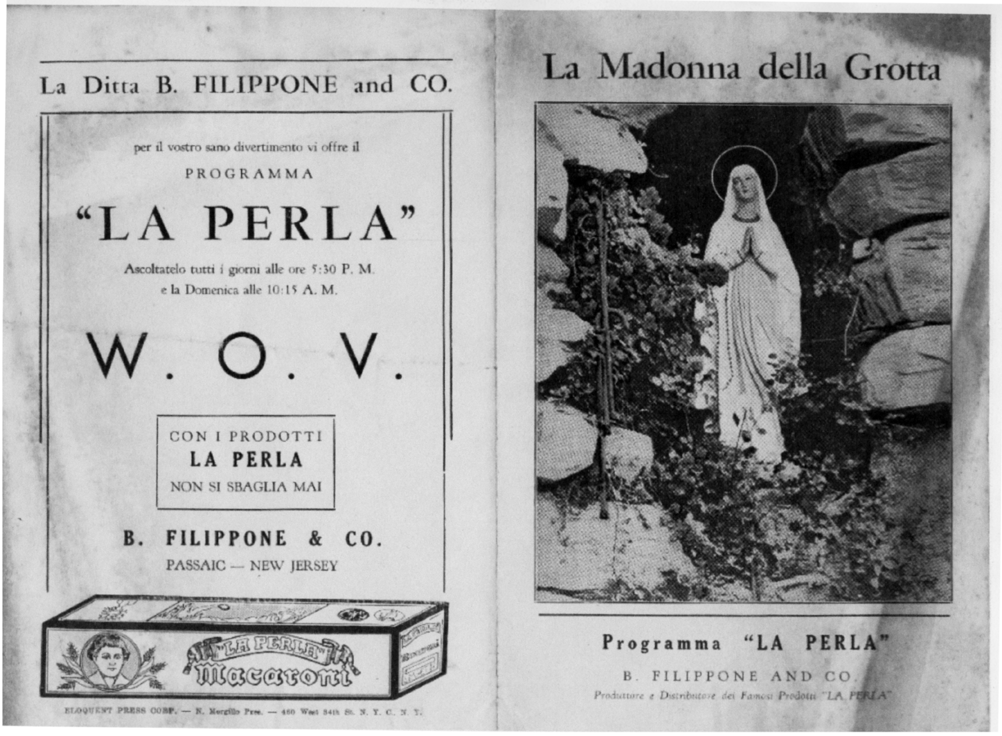
Radio, as a form of public communication consumed in a domestic setting, had the additional advantage of reaching audiences beyond the confines of Little Italy, in many instances audiences that had not encountered Italian theater before. Radio and film made these performers popular outside the closed circle of the immigrant stage, reaching out to an Italian American society that, by then, had a far more complex and diversified profile in terms of class and culture.

Several members of the old theatrical families performed on Italian radio, such as Marietta Maiori (daughter of Antonio Maiori and wife of musician Attilio Giovannelli, who accompanied Farfariello at the piano in *The Movie Actor*). Just one of the many works Marietta's company performed on Radio WOV (and on stage) was *La preghiera di Pompei*, written and directed by Orazio Cammi of *Santa Lucia Luntana* fame; this popular religious drama was sponsored by Paramount Spaghetti.

Another important radio personality was Giuseppe Sterni, already mentioned in relation to his prestigious *Teatro d'Arte*. His radio company included Nino Ruggeri, who often played the straight man to Farfariello, Raffaele Bongini, and Mario Badolati.

Emma Barbato and Angelo Gloria were the protagonists of a popular radio sit com centered on a bossy Sicilian housewife, Donna Vicenza, and it went on to have a number of spin-offs: *La classe degli asini*, in which Donna Vicenza-Emma was the teacher, and her daughter, Olga, the pupil; and *Orlando il furioso*, also starring her husband. These programs were broadcast on WOV five days a week and sponsored by Medaglia d'Oro café. In 1939, WOW published a *Diary of Donna Vicenza*, "the friend and adviser of the Italian American family,"[115] which offered domestic common sense in addition to narrating the world of 1930s Italian radio in the United States.

Religious programs too were an important part of 1930s Italian American radio. In addition to offering domestic sitcoms, Barbato-Gloria also proposed the *Ave Maria Hour* and *The Lives of the Saints*, and, on stage, *Vita passione e morte di Nostro Signore Gesù Cristo* (fig. 4.10). The Barbato-Gloria dynasty offered programs of "*Teatro dell'Arte Italica*" with



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Programma “LA PERLA”

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Figure 4.10. A religious radio program sponsored by La Perla Macaroni. (Courtesy of the George Eastman Museum.)

San Giovanni decollato by Nino Martoglio, *L'aria del Continente* and *Il ratto delle Sabine* by Campagna, and popular Italian classics such as *L'eredità dello zio Buonanima*. In effect, the immigrant performers habitually looked at the plays that were written and produced in Italy. Emma's son, Attilio Barbato, had his own popular radio program *Buon Pranzo*; in 1936, he also wrote and directed the meta-communicative *La colpa è della radio*, sponsored by Medaglia d'Oro caffè. The musical “soul” of the Barbato company was Licia Albanese, a singer at the Metropolitan who had performed under Toscanini's direction and recorded for Victor. Comedy and music were the dominant ingredients in both radio programming and the Italian American theaters in the 1930s, and they often interacted.

The emergence of a modern media culture helped preserve marked ethnic and national characteristics in the 1930s radio programs.[116] The combination of entertainment consumed at home made possible by food-producing sponsors, the use of dialect (in comedy and Neapolitan songs) as well as standard Italian in the news, and broadcasting in both traditional and modern formats (such as religious drama on the one hand and multiethnic sit coms on the other), all addressed immigrant families within a continuous dialectic that ranged between tradition and innovation. These programs gave voice to the tensions emerging within the families of the diaspora: between the first and second generations, in relation to gender roles, from cooking to clothing, to entertainment and sentimental relations. Radio was able to enter the debate between the generations with that lightness of touch made possible by both the comic format and the warmth of the domesticity represented in the programs—a domestic reality which had the authority of a modern medium while mirroring that of the living rooms and the kitchens of its listeners.[117]

One unusual format was the "Prince Macaroni Hour" broadcast, which started in February 1935 in Boston; it was an all-Italian amateur program. "In a notable response to 'Americanization,' the Prince company stipulated that only contestants of Italian birth or extraction would be eligible to take part," writes Newton in his article on Boston Italian radio. "Publicly expressed motivation for sponsoring the program was Prince's desire to afford an opportunity for Italian American culture to be recognized, if not by the nation as a whole, then by other members of the Italian colony. In some ways, the program promised the American dream (radio stardom), while simultaneously allowing performers to remain Italian American."[118] A true Italian American consciousness was emerging in the 1930s and could count on prestigious theatrical families such as the Cecchini-Aguglia, who specialized in traditional theatrical forms. Teresa, Mimì Aguglia's sister, had toured with her and Grasso in America, where she met, and married, Italian actor Gustavo Cecchini. She, her sister Sara, and their brother Luigi formed a company with Cecchini that appeared on the same stage at the Bowery where Antonio Maiori had used to perform. They worked on stage, radio, and cinema both in the United States and in Latin America. Mamma Mia olive oil sponsored their programs on radio and later, when their daughter Mimì Cecchini married Nino Romeo (son of Rosario Romeo, the director and producer of *Amore e morte*), they performed in the *Ronzoni Radio Program* too. Gustavo Cecchini also had a part in the very popular ethnic program, *The Goldbergs* given his proficiency in several languages; but he only allowed Italian to be spoken at home. Language remains a complex issue, since it is not clear how much Italian or Napolglish was actually spoken on the airwaves. Italian was certainly used in news programs and in the cultural programs supplied by the regime, but several popular productions used Napolglish, while the language connecting the diverse radio formats was English.

Another important theatrical dynasty is the already mentioned Giglio family. The Neapolitan Clemente Giglio joined his father, who was a magician and illusionist, in New York in 1891. He soon started singing and acting in Maiori's company and he later married actress Gemma Cunico (sister of Esther Cunico, who married Silvio Minciotti). Clemente performed both on the immigrant stage and on the radio and produced the sound synchronization of *'O festino e 'a legge* in 1932. The Giglios managed a theater, founded a film distribution company, Casolaro-Giglio, and published a magazine, *Lo spettacolo*, flooding every aspect of the Italian immigrant performing arts. In addition to performing on stage, Sandro Giglio, son of Clemente and his business partner, acted in the 1930s Italian-language version of *Men of the North* in Hollywood, and played a major role on Italian New York radio, together with his sister Adelina (Perzechella).[119] On radio WHOM, they performed comic songs in Napolglish, in a sort of swing mixed with *tarantella*, as in the genre made popular by Jimmy Durante and Louis Prima. In the 1950s, Sandro Giglio had an interesting film career in Hollywood.

Another radio duo was Giulio Amauli with his wife, Ada, who also performed on WHOM radio, sponsored by Ali d'Italia olive oil. Amauli was the director and producer of the ambitious costume film *Genoveffa*. Thus, the same families interacted on the stages of Little Italy, on radio, and in films in the early 1930s. It was a close network within a tiny community that occupied spaces in every area of the *spettacolo italoamericano*.

Italian radio was active in San Francisco too, where the Minciotti-Cunico, Frank Puglia, and Luigi Aguglia companies performed on stage and radio. In fact, in the 1930s, wherever there was a sizeable Italian community in the United States, there were radio broadcasts specifically targeting it, usually sponsored by Italian American food brands. However, while cultural and political programming served to intensify Italian nationalist sentiment, entertainment programs proposed a musical-theatrical repertoire with a Neapolitan imprint but an American rhythm. According to Martellone, "in the 1930s arias and overtures from Italian opera, as well as popular songs, occupied almost 70% of programming on Italian radio."[120] And Gramsci, discussing Italian "operatic taste," argues, "in Italian popular culture music has to some extent substituted the artistic expression which in other countries is provided by the popular novel."[121] Opera was indeed a key component of Italian American identity, in a culture where opera was one of the few truly national unifying elements. In addition to constituting a link to the culture of the motherland, opera facilitated the cultural legitimation of the community in the United States, and, for this very reason, the *prominenti*, the immigrant upper class, promoted it.

The immigrant musical scene was lively as well as varied. It included famous Neapolitan singer Gilda Mignonette, traveling Italian artists, and many Italian immigrants, who are discussed extensively in Frasca's *Italian Birds of Passage*. A key figure was impresario and musician Gennaro Gardenia (or Cardenia, the father of actor Vincent Gardenia) who maintained his contacts from the immigrant stage and the national scene, regularly inviting Neapolitan musical stars to visit Little Italy.

In the same years, there were also Italian performers such as Nino Martini, Russ Columbo,[122] and later, Frank Sinatra, who had their own programs on the networks, performing, through radio, for a national audience that included a large following of Italian Americans but reached a much larger (American) public.

The 1930s saw an acceleration of the sociopolitical transformation of Italian immigrant media. In 1933, Italian actors organized their union, "*la Lega di Miglioramento fra gli Artisti della Scena*," which was based in New York and supported by the main theatrical families—Maiori-Rapone, Aguglia-Cecchini, Silvio and Ester Minciotti—as well as by impresarios such as Gennaro Gardenia and Giuseppe Sterni. The *Lega* was set up in the very same year as the Screen Actors Guild in Los Angeles. This institutionalization of the theatrical community consolidated it, while giving it a new awareness of the cultural role it was performing. In the meantime, a second generation of performers, who spoke both Italian and English, was already active. These performers worked in different media, creating a more solid industry of popular culture than that forming back in Fascist Italy and represented a primacy of immigrant culture that has never been recognized in the home country.

Italian Theater Experiences in New York

The articulate *cultura dello spettacolo* evident in the films made in New York in the early 1930s and on Italian American radio was rooted in a rich theater-going experience; "a culture of film consumption," argues Bertellini, "that positioned Italy and America not as opposed, but in dialogue with one another."[123] The immigrant Italian audience could watch a variety of entertainment and news coming from Italy. They appreciated not only Italian commercial cinema and newsreels, but also Neapolitan films, like those made by Elvira Notari with her Dora Film d'America, traveling directly from Naples to New York, thus bypassing Rome and the Fascist censors.[124]

A favorite in the Little Italies was a Neapolitan silent film directed by Roberto Roberti (Sergio Leone's father), *Napoli che canta* that showed the city on the cue of famous Neapolitan songs, with a sing-along structure that brought out the text of the songs, illustrated by typical postcard views of the Mediterranean metropolis—a popular visual and aural Grand Tour leveled at emigrants.[125] In addition to a print of this film, the Eastman Museum houses the Ruggieri Collection, which contains not only various Italian American and Neapolitan films, but also film posters, lobby and window cards, stills, programs, account books and the correspondence of distributor and exhibitor Michael Ruggieri.[126] Together with the Pennino Collection in San Francisco, and a scrapbook from the Giorgio Mauri company, these documents give voice to the specificity of the *cultura dello spettacolo* of the Italians in New York in the 1930s and 1940s in all its multiple strategies of presentation.

The thousand leaflets printed by Mr. Morgillo's Eloquent Press, presenting Ruggieri's activities, map the venues (regular theaters, schools, churches, social spaces) that presented shows to Italian immigrant audiences, documenting the circulation of Italian, Neapolitan, Italian American, and American films on the East Coast. These programs reveal what theater-going meant to Italian audiences in the 1930s in Manhattan, New Jersey, and Long Island, namely, the area served by this southern Italian entrepreneur, Ruggieri. They also help to identify which Italian performers were working in the United States at that time, what type of shows were being offered, how live shows were combined with film programs (which at times included Italian newsreels and, in certain cases, double bills). They reveal the communicative strategies targeting Italian audiences such as emphasizing specific locations or advertising Italian products as well as confirming the interaction with radio and its sponsors. Combinations within individual programs could be unexpected, mixing vaudeville with newsreels on the war in Ethiopia or old Italian silent pictures with American films, obfuscating the distinction between what was live and what was film, what was Italian and what was Italian American. Some programs presented confusing information about Italian films, adding "songs" that did not exist in the Italian version, performed (live?) by local artists, or changing the original title (fig. 4.11).

The front page of a program, for example, advertised *Dopo una notte d'amore* with Isa Miranda (probably Brignone's *Tenebre*) "*con la presentazione del celebre artista Giuseppe Sterni*" (with a discussion of the film led by the famous artist Sterni), as in a film club presentation. The film was advertised as "all talking and singing," but the songs were sung by Alba

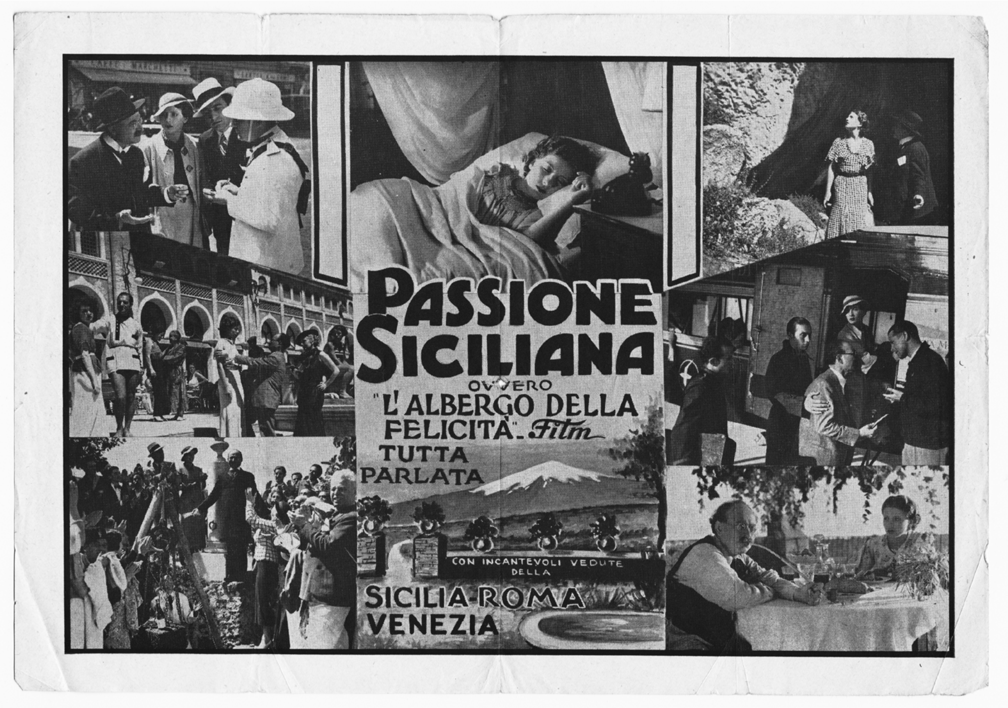


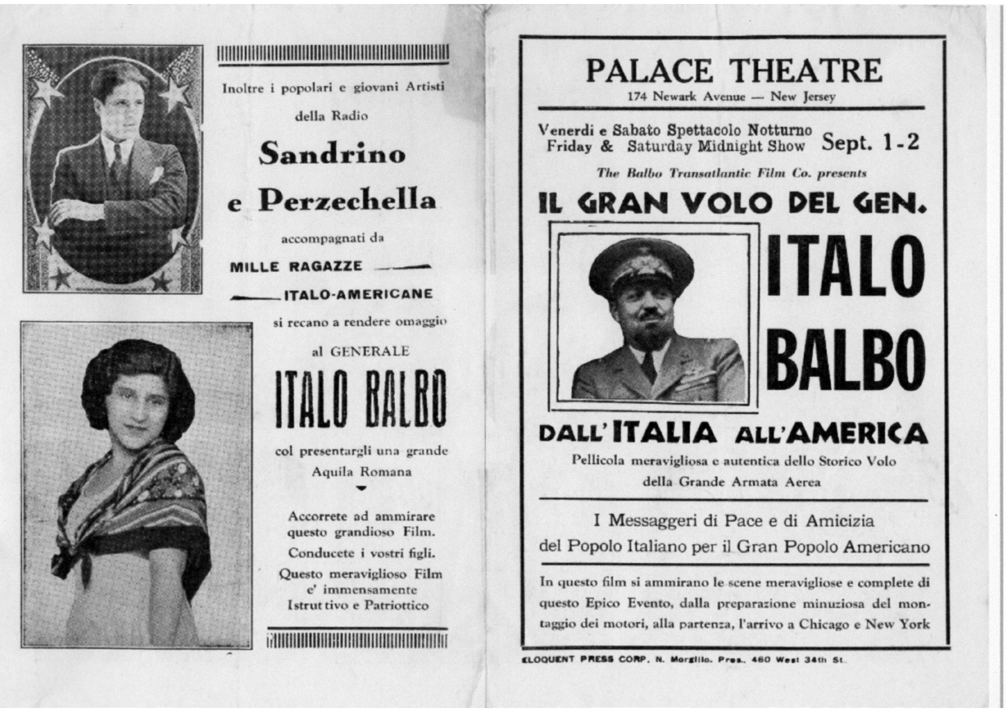
Figure 4.11. The publicity insists on the locations that appear in the film, to attract specific regional audiences. (Courtesy of the George Eastman Museum.)

Novella and Ralph Pedi, two local performers. The program included two musical shorts, *Il gondoliere* (perhaps the musical number with Nino Martini in *Paramount Review*) and *Il tango della gelosia*, perhaps a musical short made in the United States. The program also announced that audiences would "see how the famous La Rosa maccheroni are manufactured," while inside it advertised the newsreel *La vera film della Guerra Italo-Etiopica*. Nothing was lacking in this supermarket of Italian American culture.

A program devoted to Fascist national aviation hero Italo Balbo after his transatlantic flight included "famous radio artists Sandrino and Perzechella [Giglio] together with one thousand Italian American girls to present him with a Roman Eagle" plus the Italian film *Terra madre* (Alessandro Blasetti, 1931) (fig. 4.12). The mix of politics, nationalism and vaudeville might appear irreverent, but what is also puzzling is the incredible length of these programs, reaching up to three hours.

By contrast, the publicity for Zambuto's *L'avvocato difensore* emphasized the location and that "the scene takes place in the enchanting *laguna* of Venice." It was accompanied by *Old Age Pension*, a comedy short supporting the Social Security Act with popular Henry Armetta, produced by Universal, and a short with Nino Martini singing *Ridi Pagliaccio* and *Tosca* (probably from *Here's to Romance*) plus the newsreel *Grande Guerra d'Africa*.

Local star Rosina De Stefano appeared in *Surriento bello*, double-billed with *'E tre d'o core*, an interesting finding because this *macchietta* was also played by a very young Nino



Inoltre i popolari e giovani Artisti
della Radio
Sandrino
e Perzechella
accompagnati da
MILLE RAGAZZE
ITALO-AMERICANE
si recano a rendere omaggio
al GENERALE
ITALO BALBO
col presentargli una grande
Aquila Romana

Accorrete ad ammirare
questo grandioso Film.
Conducete i vostri figli.
Questo meraviglioso Film
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IL GRAN VOLO DEL GEN.
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DALL'ITALIA ALL'AMERICA
Pellicola meravigliosa e autentica dello Storico Volo
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I Messaggeri di Pace e di Amicizia
del Popolo Italiano per il Gran Popolo Americano

In questo film si ammirano le scene meravigliose e complete di questo Epico Evento, dalla preparazione minuziosa del montaggio dei motori, alla partenza, l'arrivo a Chicago e New York

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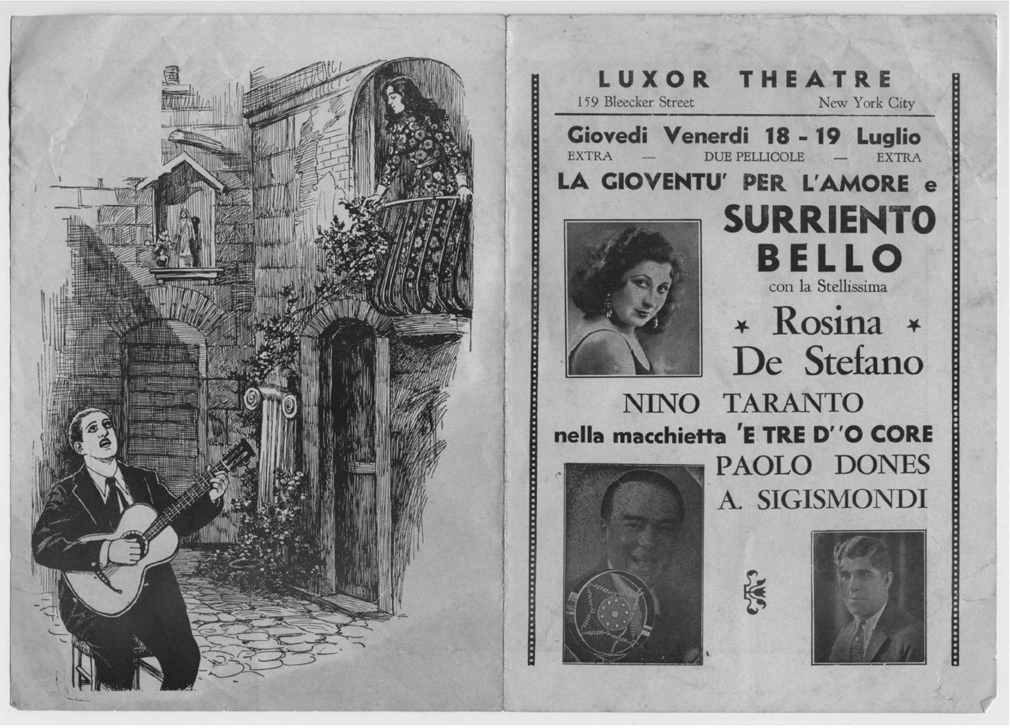
Figure 4.12. Sandrino and "Perzechella" Giglio, stars of the New York immigrant stage, with "one thousand Italian American girls," paid homage to the Fascist aviation hero Italo Balbo at the screening of a documentary on his transatlantic record flight. (Courtesy of the George Eastman Museum.)

Taranto, who went on to become a popular figure in theater, film, and music in post–World War II Italy (fig. 4.13 and 4.14).

These ads also reveal the multiethnic culture that was developing in the background (for instance, when a *Passion Play*, perhaps a synchronization of the prestigious Antamoro's silent *Christus*, was screened with Slavic titles).

Overall, these programs demonstrate a ruthless appropriation of any type of cinema—Italian, American, Neapolitan, or Italian American—with an uninhibited inclination for changing titles, cutting sections, adding sound to a silent picture, staging it "live" with songs or integrating the picture show within a vaudeville act. The dominant aspect is the presence of Italian American performers appearing live in association with Italian and Neapolitan products. There is no special reverence for politics, prestige pictures, or newsreels, or for Italian or American films; indeed, the latter are used as fillers to complete programs and are not presented individual shows. The language used is both Italian and English, but the Neapolitan spelling is quite accurate.

This collection is precious in showing what the local *cultura dello spettacolo* was made of, but it is especially crucial in revealing just how many Italian films were produced in New York at that time. Furthermore, the presence of Neapolitan titles, either made in the United States or imported from Italy, reveals how Neapolitan this culture was, not in geographi-



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Giovedi Venerdi 18 - 19 Luglio
EXTRA — DUE PELLICOLE — EXTRA
LA GIOVENTU' PER L'AMORE e
SURRIENTO BELLO
con la Stellissima
★ Rosina ★
De Stefano
NINO TARANTO
nella macchietta 'E TRE D' 'O CORE
PAOLO DONES
A. SIGISMONDI

Figure 4.13. Two films (probably musical shorts) and a live show with singers Rosina De Stefano and Paolo Dones and comedian Aristide Sigismondi.

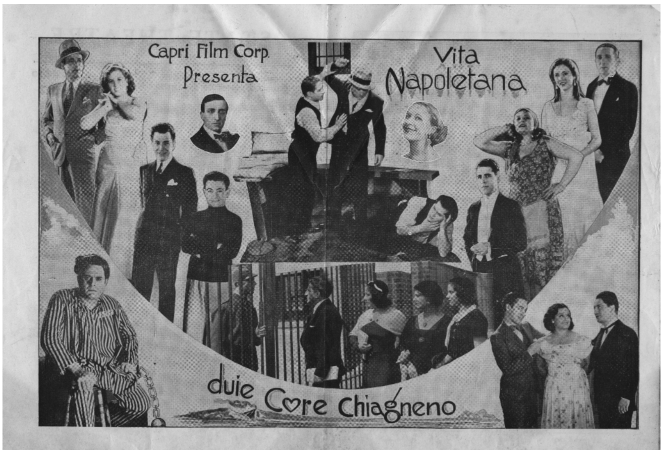
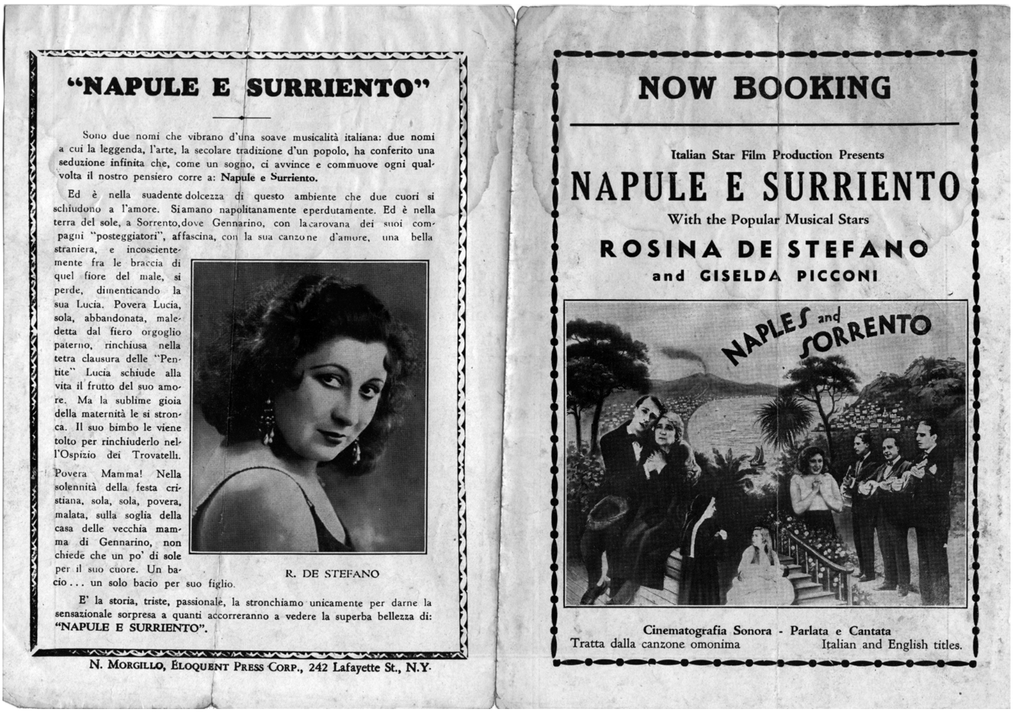


Figure 4.14. Under the title *Episodi di vita napoletana* (episodes of Neapolitan life), the program includes the film *Duie core chiagnene* with Ria Rosa and Rosina De Stefano, the comedy *Capelli alla bebe*, with Nino Taranto, who will become a very popular performer in Italy in the 1950s, and a vaudeville selection casting also Gennaro Gardenia (Vincent's father). (Courtesy of the George Eastman Museum.)

cal terms but as a cultural contiguity (fig. 4.15). The Ruggieri materials, both films and theater programs, document the dominant role of southern Italian-Neapolitan culture in the formation of an Italian American identity, able to override the differences in regional origins, favoring the identification of products, behaviors, and traditions from the south with Italianness—in short, the Neapolitan synecdoche. The numerical superiority of



"NAPULE E SURRIENTO"

Sono due nomi che vibrano d'una soave musicalità italiana: due nomi a cui la leggenda, l'arte, la secolare tradizione d'un popolo, ha conferito una seduzione infinita che, come un sogno, ci avvince e commuove ogni qualvolta il nostro pensiero corre a: **Napule e Surriento.**

Ed è nella suadente dolcezza di questo ambiente che due cuori si schiudono a l'amore. Si amano napolitanamente e perdutamente. Ed è nella terra del sole, a Sorrento, dove Gennarino, con la carovana dei suoi compagni "posteggiatori", affascina, con la sua canzone d'amore, una bella straniera, e incoscientemente fra le braccia di quel fiore del male, si perde, dimenticando la sua Lucia. Povera Lucia, sola, abbandonata, maledetta dal fiero orgoglio paterno, rinchiusa nella tetra clausura delle "Pentite" Lucia schiude alla vita il frutto del suo amore. Ma la sublime gioia della maternità le si stronca. Il suo bimbo le viene tolto per rinchiuderlo nell'Ospizio dei Trovatelli.

Povera Mamma! Nella solennità della festa cristiana, sola, sola, povera, malata, sulla soglia della casa delle vecchia mamma di Gennarino, non chiede che un po' di sole per il suo cuore. Un bacio... un solo bacio per suo figlio.

R. DE STEFANO

E' la storia, triste, passionale, la stronchiamo unicamente per darne la sensazionale sorpresa a quanti accorreranno a vedere la superba bellezza di: **"NAPULE E SURRIENTO".**

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Italian Star Film Production Presents

NAPULE E SURRIENTO

With the Popular Musical Stars

ROSINA DE STEFANO

and GISELDA PICCONI

Cinematografia Sonora - Parlata e Cantata

Tratta dalla canzone omonima Italian and English titles.

FIGURE 4.15. A Neapolitan tearjerker by Ubaldo M. Del Colle (1929), inspired by Ernesto Murolo's popular song.

southern Italians in the demographics of US emigration is not sufficient to explain this phenomenon; rather it is a form of cultural hegemony that united Italy on foreign shores, or at least on the East Coast, taking advantage of the metropolitan and cosmopolitan role Naples had always played in the south.

Herein lies the paradox: the creation of "Italians abroad" was successful, but not in the way Fascist nationalism had envisioned it; the culture of the "Italian abroad" was shaped by the mass media and by Neapolitan popular culture.

The small production companies that made films in Italian in New York had taken advantage of the reorganization of the American film market of the early 1930s, when the majors revised their distribution practices. Financial difficulties, which resulted from the Great Depression (as well as to the introduction of sound), encouraged the American film companies to adopt the double feature program and institutionalize, in contracts with exhibitors, the practice of block booking, which forced small exhibitors to lease the entire output of a major studio, including newsreels and shorts.[127] In a few years, these distribution practices and the majors' control of first-run theaters would exclude most independent productions from the market, with the result of marginalizing or limiting to state rights, the distribution of independent and ethnic products. Italian American film production would not survive in such a rigid market, also because of deep cultural transformations brought about by the New Deal.

Indeed, only two Italian feature-length films were made in the United States after 1932: *Amore che non torna* (Love that does not return) and *Due gemelli* (Two twins) (1938). The former was set in San Francisco, contained songs, and had a tragic ending, but it was not a *sceneggiata*. *Due gemelli* was a musical comedy where a young couple throw a party to celebrate the birth of their twins (*gemelli*). Among the guests are several stars of Italian American radio: singers Carlo Buti and Ria Rosa, the comic couple Cipuduzza, and Don Paolino Dones and they all improvise a sort of revue. With the increasing role of music, the synergy between radio and Italian *varietà* (variety theater) grew stronger throughout the 1930s. The production of easier-to-make Italian American shorts continued for a while and was probably limited to local distribution by the artists themselves, proposing the shorts in a show that contained "live" drama, comedy, films (even newsreels), and echoed on radio—a form that characterized *la cultura italiana dello spettacolo* in New York throughout the 1930s.

Teatro Italiano in San Francisco

In the complex geography of Italian American *spettacolo*, the high season of dialogue in Italian in films made in the United States—even if only in the MLVs of Hollywood pictures or films produced by Italians in America—lasted only until 1932. Throughout the 1930s, however, the use of Italian slowly started consolidating within the community, as demonstrated by Mimì Aguglia's experience with the Teatro Italiano in San Francisco. After her Hollywood appearances in Spanish-language films, Aguglia returned to San Francisco at the invitation of Ettore Patrizi, the (Fascist) *direttore* of the newspaper *L'Italia* and the Dante Alighieri Society in the Bay area, and so she became involved with the official Italian institutions engaged in the promotion of Italian culture and language abroad.

Initially, Mimì Aguglia interpreted both the classics and popular texts, and not exclusively Italian ones, but in the 1934–35 season, her company, named Teatro Italiano, moved to the more prestigious Community Playhouse, hoping "to appeal to both the Italian and American audience."[128] For the premiere of the Teatro Italiano on December 12, 1934, Aguglia staged the famous *Cena delle Beffe* by Sem Benelli, which had become the Barrymores's *pièce di résistance*, in which she performed the masculine role of Giannetto, the arrogant protagonist.

Conscious of its national identity, the Teatro Italiano decided to "exhibit to the public the most representative and significant works of Italian genius" such as Niccodemi's *Scampolo*, D'Annunzio's *La Gioconda*, Goldoni's *La Locandiera*, and the premiere of Pirandello's *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (*Six Characters in Search of an Author*). This repertoire offered Aguglia the ideal chance to exhibit her versatility and her exceptional talent as an actress. The premiere of *Six Characters* was, according to Estavan, "the most important art event in San Francisco theatre."[129]

After Aguglia left, following the tradition among theatrical families, her daughter Argentina Bunetti continued her work with an ambitious program which included Pirandello's *Il piacere dell'onestà*, *La maschera e il volto* by Chiarelli, and, in the 1936–37 season, Pirandello's *Ma non è una cosa seria*, Adami's *Felicita Colombo*, and Aldo De Bendetti's *Due dozzine di rose scarlatte*, the play Mussolini had selected to open the season of the *Sabati*

Teatrali (Theatrical Saturdays) in Italy.[130] In terms of premieres, Italian theaters in Rome and San Francisco were quite well aligned.

While the New York immigrant stage was pluralistic and popular, the Californian version was short lived but, thanks to Aguglia, it presented itself as an expression of legitimate Italian stage tradition—a theater for the "Italian abroad," in Fascist terms, rather than an immigrant stage. It should not be forgotten that Angelo Rossi, a second-generation Italian, had been elected mayor of San Francisco in 1931 and served until 1943, legitimizing, *Italianità* in the city in a much wider sense.

As in the confused assemblage of the Ruggieri theater programs, in the 1930s, Italian American performance culture, in its southern version, dominant in New York, and in its nationalist manifestation, more developed in San Francisco, created a work force of versatile performers that reached a much wider audience through radio or on screen and created the image and the sounds of Italian American culture.

FIVE

Italian Actors in Classical Hollywood Cinema

> He [Svevo], for example, was a pure Italian, of peasant stock that went back deeply into generations. Yet he, now that he had citizenship papers, never regarded himself as an Italian. No, he was an American; sometimes sentiment buzzed in his head and he liked to yell his pride of heritage; but for all sensible purposes he was an American, and when Maria spoke to him of what "the American" women were doing or wearing, when she mentioned the activity of a neighbor, "that American woman down the road," it infuriated him. For he was highly sensitive to the distinction of class and race, to the suffering it entailed, and he was bitterly against it.
>
> —JOHN FANTE, *Wait Until Spring, Bandini*[1]

Novelist John Fante began the saga of the Bandini family in the mid-1930s, when the Italian American community was building up a culture that would define itself as both Italian and American.[2] Cinema played a crucial role in this construction, as Arturo Bandini (Svevo's adolescent son in the book) attests when he steals money from his mother's purse to go to the movies. Fante, however, not only dreamt of the cinema, he actually became a screenwriter, leading the way for an active Italian American presence among Hollywood creators that developed, albeit silently, within the golden era of classical Hollywood cinema with directors such as Robert Vignola, Gregory La Cava, Frank Borzage, and Frank Capra—the key figure in Hollywood's New Deal cinema, but one who would maintain a complex attitude toward his origins.[3] These filmmakers of Italian birth or origins did not systematically deal with Italian characters or issues, but—as Italo Calvino noted in his *Autobiografia di uno spettatore*—most of the time, they fostered *buoni sentimenti*, and took the side of the little man.

In the 1930s and 1940s, there was a marked rise in the number of Italian immigrant performers in American cinema, but they still filled the screens without having any collective visibility, in part because, with the exception of Henry Armetta, they rarely played Italian characters. And yet it was precisely in this period that the Italian stereotype assumed more stable connotations, rooted either in the positive polarity associated with music and performance or the negative one associated with criminality, both of which were already present in American silent cinema. The formation of the Italian American stereotype was a complex discursive process, driven by American prejudices. It ran through all the popular media, and through the physical traits and performance styles of the actors. Diplomacy contributed to the process through negotiations between Fascist institutions and the American film industry. In fact, the regime carefully monitored the way Italians were portrayed, disapproving of the image of inefficient *carabinieri*, and most of all of Italian gangsters, who were regularly transformed into other nationals in Italy by simply changing their last names during dubbing. After 1933, the Hays Office became particularly alert when dealing with Italians, especially in relation to crime.[4] Other negative aspects such as servility, ignorance, and laziness remained however. "The Italian" appeared within the terms of a marked genre dichotomy: gangster films, usually played by non-Italian actors, and the musical, where Italians played impresarios, orchestra conductors, performers, and background figures. "In 1929 the gangster for the first time surpassed the cowboy as a subject for Hollywood moviemakers,"[5] and gangsters with Italian names acquired a distinctive visibility and gave rise to a new popular mythology.

A noticeable difference in ethnic casting was the new focus on "the city," with all its social problems, but also its excitement, and the dynamism that was so marked in 1930s film genres. The emphasis on urban types also involved Italian performers, never over-represented in outdoor adventures, but who appeared regularly in social or crime films, or in musicals—typical metropolitan genres.

Whether as a gangster or a singer, the Italian on the American screen was, and is, usually a southerner, often played by the "Neapolitans" of the immigrant stage. The identification of "Italian" with "southerner" had become natural because four out of five Italian immigrants in the United States came from southern Italy,[6] and because the performers available were, with few exceptions, southerners. But it was also the hegemony of southern Italian stage traditions and the resistance to assimilation by the southern Italian community that made this identification automatic. Gender-wise, male performers and masculine characters dominated the field, with the exception of Isa Miranda and a few remarkable Italian *mamas*.

Between 1933 and 1945, the historical context assumed a crucial role in the narration of the Italian American experience, as well as in its filmic manifestations.

In 1933, the world witnessed the inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the election of Adolf Hitler (two divergent reactions to sociopolitical turmoil) as well as the production of *Mussolini Speaks*—a largely favorably reviewed documentary that "lauded Mussolini's leadership of Italy."[7] In fact, the American reaction to Fascism remained generally positive throughout the 1930s and was almost unaffected by the colonial occupation of Abyssinia, because the international image of Italy was rapidly changing.[8] By "winning" this colonial war, after the defeats in the previous African campaigns and the "mutilated victory" of World War I, the "feminine" Italian *patria* (home country) of uncertain racial origins could be identified at last with the virile images of *Il Duce* on his white horse in Tripoli.[9] As discussed by George Mosse, Steven Ricci, Giorgio Bertellini and Jacqueline Reich in relation to Maciste, Valentino and the Italian "strong men,"[10] racial implications and the idea of masculinity associated with nationalism, also produced by the colonial war, penetrated deep within the Italian film consciousness and spread internationally, presenting Mussolini as a man of action and order.

The colonial empire also affected the regime's policies with regard to emigration, since autarchy created a need for more workers within the country and in the African colonies, distracting them from transatlantic travel.[11] The migrant nation became a colonial nation, and the term *colonial* was regularly applied to Italians in the United States as well. Stateside, the Italian diasporic community watched LUCE newsreels about the war, as the Ruggieri theater programs document. They also listened to Italian radio news and were quite generous in offering "gold to the motherland," showing a more or less consensual attitude toward Italian international politics. In 1933, Fascism had introduced the category of race as a legal discriminating factor for citizenship in relation to the North African colonies,[12] excluding the local population, and therefore moving in a direction that makes the anti-Semitic racial laws of 1938 a far less unpredictable decision and not simply one "imposed" by the alliance with Nazism.

In terms of film, official relations between Italy and the United States intensified through the mediation of diplomacy and the efforts of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA). In 1934, Italian diplomats visited Hollywood with great pomp, as two articles in *L'Eco del cinema* documented, reporting the presence of the Marquis Della Rosa, Italian consul in Los Angeles, accompanied by Margherita Sarfatti (Mussolini's Jewish muse), princess Pignatelli, Will Hays, and Attilio Giannini. In December that year, the magazine informed readers of a visit to the MGM lot by ambassador Augusto Rosso, who "met Louis B. Mayer and also A. H. Giannini, the famous banker as well as a delegation of directors and artists of the studio."[13] On this occasion Ambassador Rosso explained, "in Italy, we are organizing our film industry and obviously we look to Hollywood, the world center of cinema." These Italian delegations were welcomed by Will Hays, the leader of the MPPDA, and by Attilio Giannini of Bank of America. Unobtrusively, standing in the second row of the accompanying photo is Charles Pettijhon, the link between Italy and Hollywood. As the MPPDA's general counsel and head of the Protective Department, he met Mussolini in 1935 (to block possible screening quotas) and in 1937 assisted Vittorio Mussolini, the Duce's son, who visited Hollywood to experience the studio system and discuss a coproduction project with Hal Roach.[14] In November 1936, Will Hays went to Rome to meet with the pope and Mussolini; years later he narrated these meetings almost verbatim in his *Memoirs*. His appreciation of both figures, the implications of these encounters, and the politics behind them redesigned the background of Italian and American film relations.

"Nine days in Rome had given me time to see and hear plenty of evidence of constructive things that Mussolini had done for Italy," observed Hays, although his main objective was to stop the limitations the regime intended to impose on American film companies regarding the amount of lire from their box office takings that they could withdraw to the United States, when "Italy had been seeing something like two hundred American feature pictures a year."[15] To change this legislation, he had asked direct support from Roosevelt and mobilized official diplomacy to organize an appointment. "First I pointed out that the total Italian receipts from motion pictures was a vast amount, with many families supported by the earnings of American motion pictures, from which same source the Italian Government also received 100,000,000 lire in taxes. . . . As to the position of American producers and distributors, I told him that the recent Italian decree was confiscatory and that we should have to move out of Italy unless some compromise was reached."[16] (This was in fact what the companies did two years later, when the problem reemerged and the MPPDA decided to withdraw from the Italian market.) In 1936, Hays-the-diplomat resorted to adulation to convince Mussolini: "I assured him that we were as much interested in international amity as he was; . . . that in my opinion Rome was the 'cradle of all art,' and that under his guidance there was no question about the success of the Italian motion picture industry." Hays was well aware of the other reasons behind this "confiscatory" decree, namely Mussolini's investment in a modern Italian film industry but insisted on the traditional American antiprotectionist arguments and obtained permission for the studios to take twenty million lire out of Italy. As part of his adulatory tactics, Hays emphasized the presence of American newsreels in Tripoli, where Mussolini would appear on his white horse, offering the support of American companies in the construction of Mussolini's international image.

In narrating this meeting in his memoirs, he anticipated the issues this conversation might have elicited in the readers, explaining that he had become "convinced that Mussolini was not interested in Fascism as an export product," that *Il Duce* "did not want Communist activity in Barcelona," and that "anti-Semitism seems to have no place in his thought." In those years, the role Fascism played in the anti-Communist struggle and its relative distance—up to that point—from Nazi Germany reassured others as well, not only Hays. The colonial war was not even mentioned; and neither Mussolini nor Hays ever mentioned "Italians abroad."

Hays's visit to the pope had a different agenda, given the role the Catholic Church had played in writing and enforcing the Hays Code.[17] The pope in fact complimented him: "Mr. Hays, we have asked you to come here in order that we might express to you the appreciation of the Church for the improvement in the moral content of American motion pictures" since "you [the MPPDA] sit at the valve in the conduit through which flows the principal amusement of the great majority of all people in the world." But the pope also showed him a volume "of the communiqués sent out from the Comintern in Moscow to comrades and fellow travelers all over the world, and that one of the most emphatic orders was to 'go out and get hold of the cinema of the world.' This was a shocking revelation," Hays noted, "backed as it was by such irrefutable evidence, and it sheds clear light on Communist efforts in subsequent years."[18] This conversation also signals the early alliance of Catholics with the anti-Communist front, which would play a crucial role in the Cold War, involving both Italy and Italian Americans, as well as cinema as the key medium.

Fascism's increased interest in media policies and interaction with American cinema in the name of modernization and consensus, together with the autarchic policies adopted in support of Italian film production, brought deep changes to the institutional context. While American cinema still dominated the Italian market until 1938, when the *legge Alfier*i introduced a national monopoly on film distribution and forced the American majors out of Italy, the circulation of foreign films, the Venice film festival, film magazines (which were not fan magazines, but a space of cultural debate) and the Centro Sperimentale, deprovincialized and reconstituted Italian film culture.

The more active role of the regime in media matters involved "Italians abroad" in a special way. Having redefined the colonial project and deviated emigration toward internal and colonial destinations in order to relieve overpopulation, the Fascist regime transformed the "shameful" Italian diaspora into an outpost of Italian propaganda. For its part, the Roosevelt administration explored the Fascist corporative experience and established a more collaborative relationship with the Italian American community in labor and politics,[19] which also contributed to the successes of the mayor of San Francisco, Angelo Rossi, the progressive politician Vito Marcantonio, and the mayor of New York, Fiorello La Guardia.

While the institutional framework seemed favorable to taking better control of the image of Italians in Hollywood, the new Fascist media project and ideological differences did not produce a significant change in representation; on the contrary, the construction of the gangster hero as prevalently Italian introduced a never-ending tension in the field.

From the Silent Screen to the Talkies

The cultural climate of the New Deal encouraged a new sensibility in American cinema, redesigning Americanism while consolidating ethnic-national stereotypes. The filmic demands for "Italians" were met in different ways: by casting Italian performers already trained in silent American cinema, by enlisting a few stars from Italian cinema, and by hiring performers from the immigrant stage.

In classical Hollywood cinema, the representation of Italians functioned intertextually, through the accumulation of characters in different genres by Italian performers, many of whom had already established careers in silent movies.

HENRY ARMETTA

The stereotype of the (southern) Italian overlaps with the corpulent image of Henry Armetta. The gallery of his talking roles included hundreds of mustached waiters, barbers, grocers, and innkeepers—mostly nice people without much of a personality. In a career spanning thirty years, Armetta played almost two hundred characters—always minor roles—but they entailed direct interaction with the protagonists and significant screen time. He worked in quality productions such as *Romance* (Clarence Brown, 1930), alongside Garbo (playing an Italian opera star), and in Borzage's *A Farewell to Arms* (1932) as the ambulance driver. He was also Pietro, the barber in a ridiculous night gown, who helps Tony Camonte to trace Johnny Lovo in Hawks's *Scarface*, and the innkeeper who challenges Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy when playing with their fingers in *The Devil's Brother* (Hal Roach, 1933), not to mention his role as bartender Nick, who helps fugitive John Garfield in the noir *Dust Be My Destiny* (Lewis Seiler, 1939).

In the gangster comedy *Caught in the Act* (Jean Yarbrough, 1941), Armetta was an honest foreman in trouble over a protection racket, and Inez Palange's fictional husband; in *The Man Who Talked Too Much* (Vincent Sherman, 1940), Warner Bros.'s remake of the social-crime classic *The Mouthpiece* (Elliott Nugent, 1932), his on-screen wife was Rosina Galli. Both Palange and Galli were Italian actresses from the immigrant stage and enlisting them signals a change in the way Italian female characters were portrayed in Hollywood. Whereas in silent cinema the Italian orphan girl, played by American stars like Pickford or Bellamy, or the vamp *à la* Theda Bara, prevailed, in the 1930s, the Italian family, often headed by Armetta, became a place of traditional gender and generational roles—a place of domesticity as an ethnic variant to the MGM white middle-class *Andy Hardy* series with Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney.

Armetta played father figures to young singing prodigy Bobby Breen in *Fisherman's Wharf* (Bernard Vorhaus, 1939) and in *Let's Sing Again* (Kurt Neumann, 1936), recalling Gravina's roles with Jackie Coogan in the 1920s; he also appeared with the 1930s star Shirley Temple in *Poor Little Rich Girl* (Irving Cummings, 1936), transforming the pathetic character of the older man who protects a young orphan into a responsible and affectionate *pater familias*. As Papa Gambini, he was the protagonist of a whole series produced by Fox (*Road Demon*, *Winner Takes All*) centered on Italian immigrants driven by dreams of social mobility through sports competitions. In *Huddle* (Sam Wood, 1932) Armetta was a factory worker, father of Tony (Ramon Novarro), a working-class Italian who got into Yale as a football player. As for John Fante (and Arturo Bandini), sports and (in the wake of the popularity of Italian American Joe Di Maggio) in particular baseball had become a new social myth for second-generation Italians. In 1937, Henry Armetta played in *Manhattan Merry-Go-Round* (Charles Reiner, 1937), a gangster-musical-revue in which he actually "interviewed" Joe Di Maggio. The plot is of interest in that it combines music and gangsters in ways perhaps not too far removed from the realities of the music industry in the 1930s. Italian American mobster Tony Gordoni (Californian Leo Carrillo, who played more Italians than most Italian performers in classical Hollywood cinema) takes over a New York record company and looks for talent, favoring jazz and swing (with performances by Cab Calloway and Louis Prima), but his bossy mama does not like this "crazy" music and wants him to sign up a prestigious Italian opera singer instead, a choice that she thinks would be more readily appreciated within the Italian community. Using his mob to make the plan work, Gordoni is able to enlist a capricious opera star, Charlizzini (Tamara Geva). Armetta (the only Italian-born actor in the film) plays a radio announcer who waits for the guest Joe Di Maggio but initially does not recognize him and makes him sing (as if any Italian celebrity had to be a singer). The two recognize each other as *paisani* (fellow countrymen) from Sicily. This scene, which does not advance the narrative, reveals the new status of both Armetta and Di Maggio (playing themselves), as successful Italians in the United States. In fact, in the 1930s, a few Italians emerged as popular personalities in American politics, sports, and music—a small group of influential figures who, through the media, were largely responsible for the (slow but in the long run, decisive) revision of the public image of the community that was underway.

Compared with other Italian performers in the sound era, Armetta received special attention from the American press too. The *New York Times* film critic Frank Nugent colorfully described him thus: "he generally appears as an explosive Italian with an ample waistline, a list to starboard when he walks, a ferocious grin, an amazing scowl."[20]

Colorful gesturing and the use of the body are characteristics of the work of Italian actors. Considered a "natural," Armetta was appreciated for being "inimitable, comic and, at the same time, pathetic," in short, for his versatility—the recurrent trait in the critical discourse regarding Italian performers. The *Boston Globe* defined him as an "Italian comedian . . . who interprets one third of the movies made in Hollywood today and practically steals the scene as soon as he appears."[21] In fact, Nugent had noted:

> He probably drew more laughs from moving picture audiences than any other comedian, and it is almost certain that less than a tenth of the persons who saw him knew his name. . . . As a bit player he would appear in just a scene or two—generally when the picture needed a laugh. . . . Whatever the part, Mr. Armetta would be required to lose his temper, gnaw his mustache and thwack himself on the head. He knew it and the audience knew it. It was just a matter of how long before he got the signal to blow up. Yet the response was an unvarying howl of mirth. In fact, Armetta-wise audiences generally laugh in anticipation as soon as he appears.

Most film magazines emphasize his talent as a comic actor: "He is a born comedian. Not one of the high-powered funnymen of Hollywood has the power of this little man over their audiences—wrote *Modern Screen*—Laurel and Hardy, Harold Lloyd, even Chaplin, must have gags and sequences and gadgets to put their humor across but Henry—just let his face be seen on the screen and the audience howls with laughter."[22] In fact, Armetta was also the protagonist of the aforementioned series of Italian American comic shorts produced by RKO, *Nick and Tony*. He could ably use different tones and acting styles, functional to both comedy and drama, and in the final part of his career his roles in *Dust Be My Destiny* and *I Stole a Million* confirmed him as a mature dramatic actor.

American audiences appreciated his stereotypical representation of the Italian—vivacious gesturing, a bonhomie interrupted by angry reactions, a corpulence that automatically evoked wine flasks and spaghetti—a stereotype that irritated instead Italian critics to the point that, in 1951, Giulio Cesare Castello in *Alfabeto minore di Hollywood* wrote:

> Probably, in the entire American cinema, he is the man who infuriated the zealous nationalists in the Fascist era the most. Because he has been, for many years, the prototype of a certain "cliché" of the Italian in America: garrulous, servile and working as waiter, innkeeper, or similar jobs. A "cliché" that perhaps was not too far from reality. Actually, a nice guy [*un simpaticone*] with that squat figure, that large square face with a bush of black mustache, and the ample gestures of his arms and a smile that was a bit unctuous. To cite just some of his films is practically impossible. He was everywhere. He bothered Fascism until the end and closed his career beautifully [*in bellezza*] . . . with a film set in his home country, *A Bell for Adano* (1945).[23]

This comment reintroduces the issue of Italian (Fascist) reaction to the representation of nationals in American cinema: Armetta incarnated the Italian in a stereotypical combination that was particularly unwelcome for the regime. Other colleagues of his played waiters and innkeepers too, but they were not as identified as he was with Italianness. In the 1930s, Italian performers in Hollywood were not calibrated to their national identity but could be restricted to a regional identity—the southerner—or widened to include

Latinos or dark-skinned people from every latitude. However, this widening implied a racial association with "impure blood" which conflicted with the racial idealizations Fascism was then developing.[24] The association with southern regionalism was unwelcome as well; not to mention the humble professions of the characters Armetta played that recalled, only too well, the social realities of emigration. The regime had proclaimed migrants "Italians abroad" but could not accept that they were not "*poeti*, *santi*, *e navigatori*" (poets, saints, and navigators) but, miners, construction workers, tailors, shoemakers, or waiters.[25] Irritated by this swarm of actors used to fulfill the (ideological and narrative) needs of American cinema, constituting a visible (and audible) evidence of Italian emigration to the United States, Fascism never claimed them as nationals so that Italian film critics ignored them and their work. In the case of Armetta, Castello's small article is the only document about him available in Italian compared with the mountain of materials from American libraries. The arrogant stance Italian intellectuals adopted toward these actors and their regional accents, as well as toward Italian films made in the United States (and in general toward the cultural production of Italians abroad), not only confirms their disparaging attitude toward emigrants, but explains the scant critical recognition and awareness of their work.

As regards national identity, considering the characters he played, Armetta was the most "Italian" of these performers; at the same time, his official biographies state that he was born on July 4, the all-American date. Thus, Armetta, who had "stowed away on a freighter," was one of those immigrants without papers who reinvented their biography to fit the new country: when the adhesion to "Italianness" was weak, "Americanness" ended up prevailing.

WILLIAM RICCIARDI

William Ricciardi too came from American silent cinema, and in the meantime, he had successfully moved from the theaters of the Lower East Side to Broadway. Compared to his roles in silent cinema, he was able to land more quality roles in the sound era. In the 1930s, he appeared in eleven films, usually playing Italians. His stage career, including his famous *duetti* with Caruso, determined the typology of his characters, often associated with music and theater. When Ricciardi played *Mister Malatesta* on Broadway, George Bernard Shaw praised his performance, which was also appreciated by George Fitzmaurice, who had already cast Ricciardi in the Italian production of *The Eternal City* (1923). Fitzmaurice offered him the part of the affectionate butler, Pietro, in the adaptation of Pirandello's *As You Desire Me* (1932), which was a quality production with Greta Garbo, Melvyn Douglas, and Eric von Stroheim. The film is a curious product, which associates Italian settings with the cosmopolitanism typical of MGM's *Grand Hotel* style. Given the vagueness of geographical markers, the pleasant theatrical mannerisms of the Italian actors—Ricciardi, Albert Conti (the Captain) and Rafaela (*sic*) Ottiano (who plays the maid, Lena)—the film could, paradoxically, recall Italian "white telephone" films, were it not for Garbo's dramatic, short platinum hair, and for the devious character played by Stroheim. However, the romantic accompaniment of *Torna a Surriento* when Douglas (Bruno) kisses Garbo (Maria), supposedly on the Adriatic coast, and the happy ending, which rationalizes the Pirandellian plot, violated the tormented, experimental and dense drama created by the Sicilian Nobel Prize winner, demonstrating that the American film industry could Hollywoodize even Pirandello.

FRED MALATESTA

Fred Malatesta also came from American silent cinema. As mentioned, in the 1930s, he worked in several foreign-language versions of Hollywood films, including the Italian version of *The Big Trail*, and played Italian characters such as Italian officer Manera in Borzage's *A Farewell to Arms* and Nick Zellini, a boss who manages a saloon, in *Senor Jim* (Jacques Jaccard,1936). In Dorothy Arzner's *The Bride Wore Red* (1937), a film set in Trieste, an unusual Italian location, with Joan Crawford and Franchot Tone, he played Tone's valet.[26] At the end of his career, Malatesta played waiters or butlers in several important films such as Lubitsch's *Trouble in Paradise*, Van Dyke's *The Thin Man*, Chaplin's *Modern Times*, and Mamoulian's *Blood and Sand*, although he also landed some more "visible" roles: William, king of Sicily, in DeMille's *The Crusaders* in 1935, and Señor Salas in *Juarez* (William Dieterle, 1939). Following the advent of sound, unlike that of other performers in this group, Malatesta's career progressed in fits and starts and he appeared in films at times uncredited. Whereas in silent cinema his acting was often appreciated by the press, he did not receive much attention in classical Hollywood—the expansion of Italian "visibility" did not have a generalizable professional impact.

PAUL PORCASI

In contrast, Paul Porcasi's career bloomed: he was even the protagonist in an experiment with Technicolor, the Mexican musical short extravaganza *La Cucaracha* (1934). In 1929, he played Nick in *Broadway*, a spectacular experimental film adaptation of the popular stage production of the same title that had made him famous. This drama "was the first prominent work to employ the fresh argot of the underworld and display a yeasty variety of urban types."[27]

Surlier than Armetta, but less sinister than Eduardo Ciannelli, Porcasi played innumerable speakeasy and restaurant owners and impresarios, as well as brash policemen, gangsters, and army officers. The nationalities of his characters ranged from Italian to French to Greek and Hispanic. His filmography in sound cinema totals 145 credits. His musical background surfaced in his frequent casting as an impresario: in *Footlight Parade* (Lloyd Bacon, 1933), with his brilliant interpretation of Mr. Apolinaris, stomach-wrenching when he decides to support Chester's (Cagney) new spectacular musical numbers in *Enter Madame* (Elliott Nugent, 1934), alongside Italian American Elissa Landi, and in *Maytime* (Robert Leonard, 1937).

Porcasi's Latin looks, with his elegant pinstripe suit, two-tone shoes, and cigar, offered a dry and particularly versatile variant of the Italian stereotype in classical Hollywood cinema. But at times, his roles also had undesirable connotations: in *Morocco* (Josef von Sternberg, 1930), Porcasi was Dietrich's impresario, but he wore a bandana and a large earring and had dark skin: he looked more like a gypsy than an Italian (named LoTinto). Like most of his colleagues, he seemed unaware of the negative connotations of the characters he portrayed, nor could he do anything about them. In *Casablanca* too, he plays the unctuous "native" who introduces Ferrari (Greenstreet) to the desperate couple. At times, his stereotypical mannerisms within otherwise brilliant performances could be irritating, but he achieved the unique effect of being a type, a "mask" from the commedia dell'arte, while still offering individualized performances. Porcasi died in 1946, so he did not get the chance to work in the American cinema, which became more welcoming to Italian performers and characters after World War II.

FRANK PUGLIA

In sound cinema, Frank Puglia's musical background often influenced his casting: he played an orchestra conductor in *Balalaika* (Reinhold Schuntzel, 1939), *Phantom of the Opera* (Arthur Lubin, 1943) and *Maytime*. Of his impressive 150 credits, Puglia claimed that his favorites were Dr. Abramonte in *Yellow Jack* (George Seitz, 1938), Villa's father in *Viva Villa!* (Jack Conway, 1934), the villain in *Charlie Chan in Panama* (Norman Foster, 1940), the police chief in *Torrid Zone* (William Keighley, 1940), the padre in *Arise, My Love* (Mitchell Leisen, 1940), Pedro in *Billy the Kid* (David Miller, 1941), a pundit in *Jungle Book* (Zoltan Korda, 1942), the traitor in *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* (Arthur Lubin, 1944), the Japanese diplomat in *Blood on the Sun* (Frank Lloyd, 1945), and a jockey in *Stallion Road* (James Kern, 1947).[28] He also played the clumsy taxi driver in Rio de Janeiro whose car crashes while taking Bette Davis and Paul Henreid to the port in *Now Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1942), speaking Spanish but concluding his sentences with "Mama mia prega per noi!" (Mother of mine, pray for us!) This admirable cameo emphasizes his ability as a comic actor: the scene lasts longer than is necessary for its narrative function, revealing a continuing Hollywood strategy of valorizing the performance of these Italian actors.

During the war, Puglia appeared in democratic propaganda movies, including *Casablanca* (he played the Moroccan carpet seller who marks down his price for Rick's friends), *Action in the North* Atlantic (Lloyd Bacon, 1943), *Mission to Moscow* (Michael Curtiz, 1943), and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Sam Wood, 1944) There is no way of knowing whether such roles corresponded to his political orientation, but his earlier association with the Modotti family would confirm the hypothesis that he was a democrat. He also appeared in several films with other Italian performers including *Down the Argentine Way* and *That Night in Rio*, both directed by Irving Cummings, alongside Italian American Don Ameche). He acted in *Lost Moment* (Martin Gabel, 1947) with Eduardo Ciannelli, in *Walk Softly Stranger* (Robert Stevenson, 1950) with Alida Valli, in *Serenade* (Anthony Mann, 1956) with Mario Lanza, and in *Black Orchid* (Martin Ritt, 1958) with Sophia Loren. In the 1950s, he played a witty mafia victim in *The Black Hand* (Richard Thorpe) with Gene Kelly, who played an Italian policeman fighting the mafia. Puglia later appeared in several TV series, most memorably in *The Untouchables.*

With a huge and important filmography, Puglia is undoubtedly a key Italian in Hollywood, one who traversed American media from the stage to silent and sound cinema and television, without playing too many waiters. He was cast as the undertaker Bonasera in Francis Coppola's *The Godfather* (and even took part in Marlon Brando's screen test for Don Vito Corleone), but he fell ill and was unable to appear on-screen. This was most unfortunate, as it would have been the perfect way to crown his long career in Hollywood.

AGOSTINO BORGATO

In Hollywood since the 1920s, Agostino Borgato had an intensive activity in Spanish versions of Hollywood films and participated in about thirty sound films in fairly important roles. He appeared with Joan Crawford and Clark Gable in *Love on the Run* (Willard Van Dyke, 1936), which is a good example of flexible casting. In the film, Borgato, together with Gennaro Curci and Frank Puglia, played French characters, while WASP actors played characters with Italian names. In the 1930s, Borgato also played a fair number of Italian roles, such as the opera fan in *Rose-Marie* (Van Dyke, 1936), a World War I spy in *Till We Meet Again* (Robert Florey, 1936), and a waiter in Arzner's *The Bride Wore Red* (1937), which included several Italian performers (Puglia, Porcasi, Corsaro, Gino Corrado, Adriana Caselotti and Francesco Maran), albeit in lesser roles. Many Italian actors also appeared with Curci and Corrado in *A Trip to Paris* (Malcom St.Clair, 1938), in which Borgato played Alphonse; in *The Three Musketeers* (Allan Dwan, 1939), he worked alongside Don Ameche.

By a strange coincidence, he, who had been one of Garbo's favorite players, played his last role as an old actor in *Hotel Imperial* (Robert Florey, 1939), alongside Italian star Isa Miranda, launched in Hollywood as the "new Garbo." Borgato died in Hollywood, in 1939.

RAFAELA OTTIANO

Rafaela Ottiano made a couple of silent films too, but she really began to leave her mark with the advent of sound, which allowed her to use her theatrical expertise. She was born in Venice to a French Italian family who moved to the United States in 1910. According to some sources, her parents were musicians, but she soon abandoned her musical education and began acting, apparently in Europe. She was competent in Italian, French, Spanish, and English and appeared in about forty titles between 1932 and 1942, often in important roles if not always in major films.

In her first sound films, she performed parts she had successfully played on Broadway, such as Suzette in *Grand Hotel* (Edmund Goulding, 1932) —an interpretation appreciated even by Vicki Braun, author of the play.[29] Ottiano also portrayed Russian Rita, Mae West's fierce antagonist in *She Done Him Wrong* (Lowell Sherman, 1933). At MGM she played Lena—Maria's (Garbo) maid in the film adaptation of Pirandello's *As You Desire Me* (alongside Ricciardi)—and was cast in films overflowing with Italians. She was the mean Miss Trigge in *Bondage* (Alfred Santell, 1933), but her most famous role is the diabolic Malita in Browning's *The Devil Doll* (1936), appreciated by critics too. Malita is a cripple who helps a mad scientist (Lionel Barrymore) to create his miniature humans. She is spine chilling, with her tuft of white hair and wild eyes, but shows a maternal side when she takes care of the scientist. Her virtuoso interpretation confirms her as being among the more competent and versatile of these professionals. As a reviewer wrote, "She can put more menace in a simple act, like winding a clock, than most actors could while strangling a child."[30] Her on-screen national identity remained vague, because she was represented more as a type (the malignant spinster) than for her ethnic traits.

JACK LA RUE

Jack La Rue reportedly was a tall, slender Italian from New York, who looked like a young, more handsome, Humphrey Bogart (fig. 5.1).[31] He was born Gaspare Biondolillo into a Sicilian family in New York in 1902 and trained as a piano tuner. He made his debut on Broadway in the 1920s, changing his unpronounceable name into the exotic Jack La Rue. Living close to the New York–based Vitagraph studios, he used to hang around film sets, and during the silent film era, he was an extra in *Fine Manners* (LewisMilestone, 1926) with Gloria Swanson, and in *East Side, West Side* (Allan Dwan, 1926). His true film career, however, began with the arrival of sound and consisted of over 120 titles, although he often stated that he preferred theater (indeed from 1923 to 1931 he spent most of his time on stage). On stage he was the leading man in *Diamond Lil* with Mae West for one year. He also worked in "serious" drama in Theater Guild productions and received good reviews for his role in Channing Pollock's preachy *The Fool*.

The watershed in his film career was the decision to play Trigger in the scandalous adaptation of William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, titled *The Story of Temple Drake*. The role had been offered to (another Italian American) George Raft, who turned it down, but as stated in a contemporary article, "La Rue Thinks 'Suicide Role' A Fine Chance" even if doubts remained ("Will His First Big Role Make Or Break Jack La Rue?").[32] Wisely, La Rue answered, "Bad acting has ruined actors—not bad parts," and attacked Hollywood typecasting: "On the stage in New York, they don't have you typed in a role. . . . I have played every sort of part on Broadway. I played the bullfighter in 'Blood and Sand,' I played the Spanish fellow in Diamond Lil with Mae West. I have played both heavies and lovers."[33]

In *The Story of Temple Drake* (Stephen Roberts, 1933), his Trigger combines both the literary character of Popeye, who rapes Temple, and gangster Red, who kidnaps her. The name Trigger refers to the speed with which the criminal could handle a gun as well as his troubled sexuality. He retains Popeye's traits in *Sanctuary*, with the ability to smoke a cigarette while talking, the sinister little red light signaling, in a typical Faulknerian Gothic, the danger lurking in the darkness for Temple. Like Popeye, he moves around quietly and always wears an elegant black suit, his hat pulled down over his brow. The film makes no references to his impotence but creates a tension between his gratuitous sadism and the exact reproduction of his traits in the novel. Applying typical self-censorship strategies, the film condenses, associates, and transfers the sexual elements of *Sanctuary* into metaphors, stylistic procedures, and a symbolic use of objects, most notably the cigarette hanging from

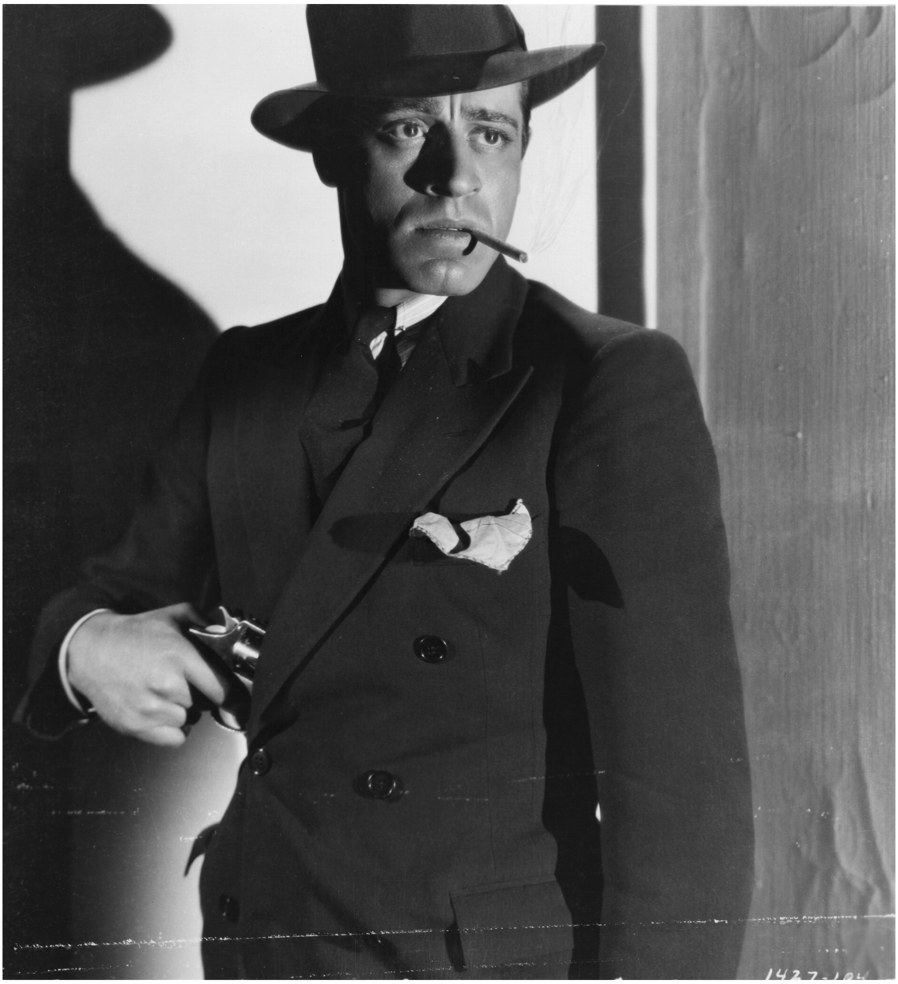


Figure 5.1. Gaspare Biondolillo changed his unpronounceable name into Jack La Rue. He gave his most memorable performance in *The Story of Temple Dra*ke (1933), the film adaptation of Faulkner's scandalous *Sanctuary*. (Courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.)

his lips and the fast gun. His violence resembles an almost infantile compulsion to hurt people, like an unaware Frankenstein, but after the rape he drags the unconscious Temple out of the car and, in a clumsy attempt to take care of her, tries to convince her to have a hot coffee. La Rue was particularly good at changing registers, for example in the scene where he suddenly reveals his fragility when Temple first kisses him and then shoots him with his gun. Compared to a similarly unexpected tender scene in *Scarface*—when Rinaldo (Raft) shifts from being the ruthless gangster to being Cesca's doting lover, Raft looks more embarrassed than romantic in his silk robe—La Rue's acting is superior in every way.[34]

In his film career, La Rue also played a few Italian Americans, in particular the sensitive Italian chaplain, a friend of the protagonist in Borzage's *A Farewell to Arms*.[35] He played the womanizer Carlo in Arzner's *Christopher Strong*, and the mobster Scarfi in *East of the River* (Fred Niblo, 1940), written by John Fante.

"Protected" by his exotic name, he also played menacing criminals in numerous small roles in some good films in 1932, the year before the enforcement of the Hays Code. A versatile performer, he went on to act in costume films and some westerns and played some self-deprecating mobsters in *Never a Dull Moment* (Edward Lilley, 1943), *Road to Utopia* (Hal Walker, 1945), and *My Favorite Brunette* (Elliott Nugent, 1947) with Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour. And yet his initially promising film career did not bring the expected results, perhaps because after the enforcement of the Hays Code, there was no room for characters such as Trigger—only stereotypical gangsters. In the 1950s, he appeared in some episodes of popular television series, including *Perry Mason* and *Cheyenne*, but he concentrated his energies on running a restaurant.[36]

The most important phase in La Rue's career thus coincided with the golden age of classical Hollywood and genre films, before neurotic psychology or the dark atmosphere of film noir moved in. His last film role was in the comedy-gangster-musical *Robin and the Seven Hoods* (Gordon Douglas, 1964) with Sinatra and Dean Martin, set in the ironic world of the gangster musical, where Italian Americans could make fun of their own stereotype. (He actually ran a nightclub in real life.) As an obituary noted: "He became the prototype tough guy, the man in the double breasted, pin-stripe suit, the practitioner of the Chicago-style mob hit and dark, evil penetrating stares who always sneered at the good guys in movies such as *The Mouthpiece*, *The Woman Accused* and *Take the Stand*."[37] His qualities as a performer even reached inhospitable Italy. In *Filmlexicon*, Puccini defines La Rue as "a magnificent actor, a powerful mask, with typically southern warmth, but disciplined and organized intelligently. It is a pity that he is usually used carelessly."[38]

La Rue delivered the most modern portrayal of Italian American gangsters and was more conscious of the implications of this sort of characterization. He was offered a role in *The Godfather* but refused it because he did not want to add another criminal role to his long filmography. His comments in an interview,[39] show that he was an early example of an Italian American performer to publicly resent the association of gangsters with Italianness. In the postwar period, however, the image of Italians and Italian Americans started changing, and it was indeed possible for Italian Americans to try to take more control over their image by refusing to play along with the expectations.

With the introduction of sound, however, the negative aspects of the image of Italians in early silent cinema, the pathos of the second phase and the contradictory traits espoused in the 1920s did not disappear altogether. Hollywood did not develop an authentic anthropological curiosity toward the "real" Italian community: even though fishermen, construction workers, truck drivers, among others, did start to appear, most characterizations were still dominated by stereotypes.

The setting of the film, whether geographic or professional, determined the number of Italians in the credits. Hollywood had identified a European macro type and a Latin one within which Italians could function both as representatives of their own national community and as pieces within a mosaic of diversity. In the 1920s, Italians on screen were interchangeable with most Europeans, and in the 1930s they often played Hispanics, because of their accent and looks. However, the flexible politics of national and ethnic identity in American cinema functioned alongside stereotypical simplifications.

From the Music Scene to the Screen

"It has been a long time since a lyric tenor so handsome, with so slim and graceful a figure and such a lovely voice has been heard there [at the Metropolitan] in Italian romantic roles. And every pretty girl in New York knows him."[40] This portrait of Nino Martini (Verona 1905–1976), taken from a thick press book, offers an immediate sense of his assets, and of their potential within the synergy of stage, radio, film, and music recording that characterized the sound era.

Like Caruso before, and Mario Lanza soon after, Italian and Italian American representatives of *bel canto* constituted a safe investment for Hollywood, with the added value of extra-filmic popularity and, in this case, a "slim and graceful figure" too—a rare quality indeed among tenors. At the time, the American press coverage of his work in radio, opera, and film is quite impressive. (He was so popular that Dino Crocetti chose Dean Martin as a stage name in his honor.)

NINO MARTINI

Martini was a "young man with a jaunty air, Latin charm and a brigand's gaze" born in Verona (northern Italy) in 1902, to the family who looked after Juliet's grave, which was a detail most articles emphasized, at times calling him "a Romeo," hinting at his popularity with female audiences.[41] After failing earlier on at breaking into film, but having become an incredibly popular radio star, his film career took off between 1935 and 1937 when he starred in three films, each with a fabulous contract. In *Here's to Romance* (Alfred Green, 1935), he played Nino Donelli, an Italian singer who discovers that his studies have been secretly sponsored by a rich American lady. Among the cast were Albert Conti and Maria Gambarelli. Fan magazines praised his looks and his voice and presented him as being besieged by young romantic girls, a sort of "bobbysoxers idol" before Sinatra, or the new Latin lover—a much needed figure in the musical stardom of the 1930s.[42]

His most interesting film was *The Gay Desperado* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1936) with Ida Lupino and Leo Carrillo, partially shot on location in the Arizona desert. He plays a singer named Chivo, this time a Mexican. In this unusual musical, Mexican bandit Braganza's (Leo Carrillo) gang watches an American gangster film in order to learn how to behave like real mobsters, which is very much like the Tony Soprano's gang who knew *The Godfather* by heart. With a meta-communicative twist, not uncommon in musicals, the initial "film within the film" is a fake gangster picture with look-alikes of Jack La Rue, George Raft, James Cagney, and Edward G. Robinson. Together with *Manhattan Merry-Go-Round*, this is one of the first associations of gangsters, music, and irony—a combination that later became a sub-genre, particularly in tune with Italian talents, culminating in the popularity of the Rat Pack. *The Gay Desperado* was indeed one of the best musicals of the time, Mamoulian's favorite film, and was voted Film of the Year by the New York Film Critics Circle. This was an important result for Martini, although the strength of the picture resides in its direction, not in his acting.

In the third film, *Music for Madame* (John Blystone, 1937), he plays Nino Maretti, an Italian emigrant who loves *bel canto* and travels to Hollywood, where a gang uses his singing talent (and his charm) to distract the ladies at a party in order to steal their jewels. The prestigious cast included Joan Fontaine.

This musical trilogy had high production standards, paired Martini with female stars, and was centered on his role as a singer who could propose a mix of opera and songs, as he did on radio and in his live shows. While there is little coverage of his career in Italian, he often was mentioned in the American press. When he embarked on a trip to Italy, the *Herald Tribune* showed him boarding the *Conte di Savoia*, accompanied by the beautiful Elissa Landi, at that time his fiancée, and noted that seven thousand fans were there to greet him. "Martini radiates the true spirit of romanticism with his black hair, brown eyes, slender figure, clear olive skin and melodies of appealing tenderness that lull audiences into trancelike states of adulation," wrote a journalist,[43] attributing him black hair and "olive" skin, going against the visual evidence of his "Arian" northern Italian complexion, as if, to American eyes, all Italians were southern types.

When the war broke out in 1941, Martini obtained American citizenship and continued to perform in the United States, offering concerts at Allied military camps. In May 1945, the Overseas Division of US Camp Shows invited him to tour Europe. In 1948, he made his last film, *One Night with You* (Terence Young), a British production with some Italian locations. His acting and singing career ended in 1952 when he returned to Verona. As the *New York Times* obituary suggested, watching his films today one can agree with a reviewer of *The Gay Desperado* who "said that he was a much better tenor than he is a comedian,"[44] but his popularity in the mid-1930s was indeed exceptional.

EDUARDO CIANNELLI

Another actor who had gained initial success as a baritone was Eduardo Ciannelli (Ischia 1889–Rome 1969), but in classical Hollywood cinema his "craggy, lined face, his jutting chin, and seemingly malevolent eyes were familiar to thousands of movie fans," noted his obituary, "who could count on him to portray criminal masterminds with great professional flair" (fig. 5.2).[45] He was born in Ischia into a well-to-do family: his father was a doctor who founded a modern spa there and his mother was an English aristocrat. He enrolled at the medical school in Naples to become a doctor yet continued to perform as a baritone with the prestigious Mercadante theater. He moved to the United States in March 1914.[46]

His first film credit is *The Food Gamblers* (1917), an educational film produced by the State of New York in order to fight the black market during World War I.[47] In 1918,

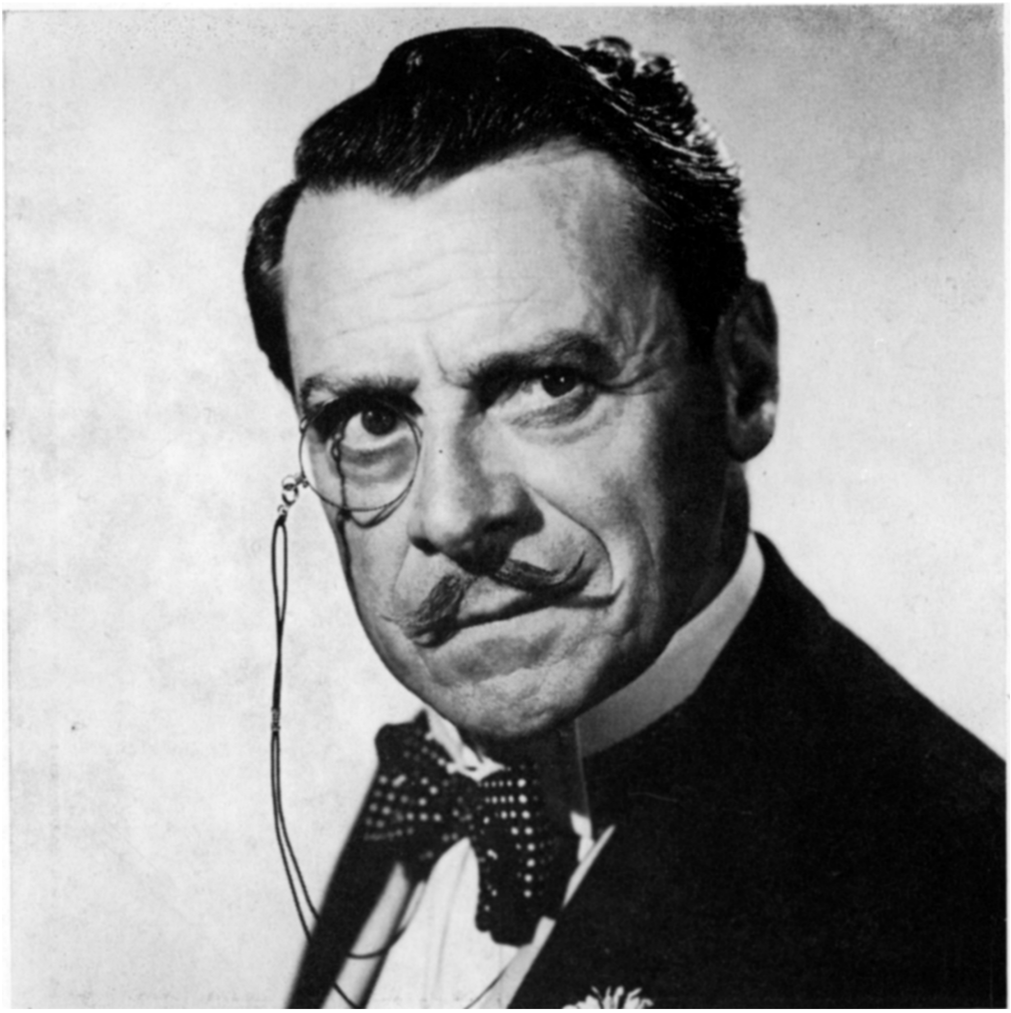


Figure 5.2. Eduardo Ciannelli in Sam Wood's *Heartbeat* (1948).

he married Alma Wolfe, who came from a noted Broadway dynasty.[48] He performed in the operetta *Rose-Marie* (1924–1926), played Diamond Louie in Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur's *The Front Page* (1928–1929), and Telegin in *Uncle Vanya* (1930). He also acted in R. E. Sherwood's *Reunion in Vienna* (1931–1932) with the Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne Company, always achieving remarkable personal success.

In 1927, his intellectual curiosity led him to direct and perform on Broadway a translation of a popular Italian play, *Marionette che passione* (*Puppets of Passion*) by Rosso di San Secondo, further proof of the many interactions between Italian and American legitimate theater at the time. Even when he started acting in film, he did not abandon the stage and, in 1933, he wrote and produced *Foolscap* with Gennaro Curci,[49] an experimental play in which Bernard Shaw and Luigi Pirandello were living in a mental institution; he played Pirandello.

Unexpectedly, considering that there is no record of him frequenting the immigrant stage, his film career started with films made by the diasporic community in New York, where he acted in the aforementioned (and little documented) *Così è la vita*.

His early American film career had little to do with his musical background but was strongly linked to his theatrical work. He played the screen version of his own stage role in the film adaptation of *Reunion in Vienna* (Sidney Franklin, 1933) with John Barrymore, and acted in *The Scoundrel* by Hecht and McArthur, shot in 1935 in the Astoria Studios in Long Island, probably when he was still based in New York. In *Winterset*, written by Sherwood Anderson, he played Trock Estrella, the actual murderer in the Sacco and Vanzetti case. Brooks Atkinson praised his performance: "His cruel, sneering Trock is a vigorous portrait of malevolence. . . . He is fear-ridden yet assured; cringing yet ruthless; distrusting and hating everyone but himself."[50]

After these experiences connected with his stage career, Ciannelli often landed important parts as either the antagonist or a criminal, sometimes an Italian. His filmography includes more than one hundred titles—a very significant number in sound cinema, especially when considering the scale and scope of his roles. One of his more memorable parts was the elegant and cold-blooded gangster Johnny Vanning in *Marked Woman* (Lloyd Bacon, 1937), inspired by the prosecution against the prostitution racket managed by Lucky Luciano. Given the references to real events, Warner cast an Italian actor who had already played brutal criminals in the role of Luciano, but "denationalized" him as Vanning, so as not to upset Italian censors and the Italian American community that had started to manifest its rejection of associating Italians with the mafia. In the film, Ciannelli plays his character as a sadistic but well-mannered gangster, thus avoiding the primitive animalistic violence of Paul Muni's Scarface, or the neurotic behavior of Little Caesar, as interpreted by Edward G. Robinson. He maintains a strong command of the scene, moving with a strutting rigidity that masks his controlled violence but never connotes his character as Italian. This film documents a particular moment in the history of the gangs, namely, the "Americanization of the mobs," as Luciano's rise as a gangster has been defined, given the diversified organization of the racket, and the fact that Luciano's gang was not mainly made up of Italian Americans.[51] As Raft's biography recounts, the connections between Hollywood and organized crime did not only belong to the realms of the imagination. It was not unusual, in those years, for small-time criminals to work as extras in Hollywood,[52] since the studios often made use of mobsters to manage difficult labor situations or in the internal struggles of the industry.[53]

In 1940, Ciannelli appeared as Mr. Krug in Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent* and Giono, the saloon keeper, in *Kitty Foyle* (SamWood). During World War II, he remained in the United States and played in democratic films such as *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Sam Wood, 1943), *Passage to Marseille* (Michael Curtiz, 1944) and *The Mask of Dimitrios* (Jean Negulesco, 1944). At the end of the war he also acted in American films set in Italy, including *A Bell for Adano* (Henry King, 1945) and *The Lost Moment* (Martin Gabel, 1947), Henry James's *The Aspern Papers*, adapted by Leonard Bercovici (who shortly would become a blacklisted writer, during the Witch Hunt).

In 1948, with the rebirth of the Italian cinema, Ciannelli traveled between Italy and the United States. In his home country, he worked on US international coproductions such as *Vulcano* (William Dieterle,1950) with Anna Magnani and a bilingual cast,[54] and several Italian films of varying quality, including the Italian episode of *I vinti* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1953) and a spaghetti western, *La collina degli stivali* (Giuseppe Colizzi), 1957). In the States, he played the orchestra conductor and father of Sophia Loren in *Houseboat* (Melville Shavelson, 1958) with Cary Grant. He also appeared in several episodes of various popular American television series, from *Johnny Staccato* (where he played the jazz club owner) to *I Love Lucy* or *Mission: Impossible*, often in the role of an Italian American.

Ciannelli's career covers more than thirty years of activity in theater, film, and television, mainly in the United States, but also in Italy. He had a much higher profile than a superficial reading of his intense filmography might suggest, revealing not only his notable qualities as a performer, but also a higher cultural level than most of his colleagues, probably the result of his social origins and his professional status. His interpretation of cold-blooded, well-mannered gangsters was perhaps a deliberate performance strategy: a corrective that raised questions about the representation of gangsters in Hollywood.

The aforementioned Franco Corsaro also had a musical background.[55] In the interwar period, mostly as an extra, he appeared in seventy-nine films, including Victor Schertzinger's *Love Me Forever*, William Wyler's *Jezebel*, Arthur Lubin's *Black Friday*, and Mamoulian's *The Mark of Zorro*, playing a waiter in at least seven films. During World War II, when Italian Americans were forced to "take sides," he played small roles in propaganda war films such as *Spy Smasher*, *Casablanca*, *The Desert Song*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and *We've Never Been Licked*. In the postwar period, he appeared in both European and American films: Billy Wilder's *Emperor Waltz*, Lewis Milestone's *Arch of Triumph*, and in *Black Magic*, *Cagliostr*o (Gregory Ratoff) alongside Orson Welles, as well as in various television series. Discarding his early dream of making a film career as a Latin lover, Corsaro played secondary roles, frequently as an Italian or an Italian American. He had a final chance of gaining even greater popularity in the role of Genco in *The Godfather*, but his character was cut from the final theatrical version.

Second-generation Nick Lucas, born Dominic Lucanese (Newark 1897–Colorado Springs 1982) learned to play the mandolin and the guitar within his immigrant family from Avellino, near Naples. He became a singer, "the Crooning Troubadour," and such an excellent solo guitarist that Gibson "designed a guitar to Nick Lucas's specifications."[56] As a film actor he played in *Gold Diggers of Broadway*, one of the first talkies, a dynamic musical shot in Technicolor, in which he sang "Tip-Toe Through the Tulips," his trademark song, which "sold three million copies in its original pressing. In fact, Lucas sold over eighty million records in the 1920s and 1930s."[57]

Italian American Russ Columbo, born Ruggiero Colombo (Camden, NJ 1908–Los Angeles 1934) learned to play the violin within his Salerno family. A protagonist of the musical scene on radio, he also starred in the musical *Broadway Thru a Keyhole* (Lowell Sherman, 1933) written by Walter Winchell and loosely based on the life of Al Jolson. Columbo played a singer (Jolson) who falls in love with a dancer (Constance Cummings), who is the girlfriend of New York Mob boss Frank Rocci (Paul Kelly). Columbo was the protagonist of another musical, *Wake Up and Dream* (Kurt Neumann, 1934) with an appearance by Paul Porcasi, and with Henry Armetta as his foster father, but he died before it was premiered, shot by a friend who was cleaning a gun. Zeppo Marx and Bing Crosby were two of his pallbearers.[58]

Louis Prima from New Orleans (1910–1978) was a jazz musician, trumpeter and singer. As Rotella notes, "when Louis Prima was born on December 7, 1910, the population of the French Quarter of New Orleans was nearly 80% Italian . . . as in Sicily, there was a cultural mix—a melding of French, Black, and Cajun food."[59] This fusion of black and Sicilian culture in New Orleans at the origins of jazz is a key cultural element that Prima embodied, and not only in his music, especially when he started singing *Angelina* or *I'm Just a Gigolo* in Napolglish, but because of his physical features, with his dark complexion, curly hair, and broad nose, to the point that people sometimes mistook him for a Creole. "Prima himself further contributed to the confusion over his racial origins by openly crossing the color line as the only white bandleader of his time who performed regularly at major black clubs throughout the country."[60] He appeared in several films but only in musical numbers, not as an actor. His hybridization of Neapolitan, Italian, American, and Afro-American music was a vital creation, marked by an irony that made his assumption of a racialized and yet cosmopolitan identity even more powerful.

From Dance Halls to the Big Screen

Italian descent was not only determined by blood but could also be a cultural choice. George Raft was born in 1901 "of German, Italian and Dutch parentage and desperately poor" in the infamous Hell's Kitchen neighborhood of New York City, but he preferred to be identified as having Italian origins.[61] From the boxing ring and dance halls, he reached Broadway without losing touch with the mob, and in particular, with his childhood friend Owen Madden and rubbing elbows with Bugsy Siegel. Apparently, he was working with Siegel's gang, which was quite active in the film industry in 1929, when the chance presented itself to start a film career in *Queen of the Night Clubs* (Bryan Foy, 1929) and *Quick Millions* (Rowland Browne, 1931), in both cases in the "natural" role of a gangster—and a dancer (fig. 5.3).

His film activities were amply covered by the fan press, which, at the outset, compared him to Valentino, illustrating their resemblance with a photo spread. "Raft doesn't like to be a celluloid 'softie'" one of the articles stated; "Nothing confounded him more than to be labeled 'the second Valentino.' True, he has the same dark, veiled eyes—the steady glance that pierces, yet gives no hint of the thoughts or feelings behind it."[62] Actually the vague resemblance was accentuated in the poses and composition of the photos, but Raft had none of the seductive power of the sheik, nor his acting skills.

Slim, conspicuously elegant, with a flat imperturbable voice, Raft was ideal for roles that call for cold-blooded criminals such as Guino Rinaldo, who flips a coin in *Scarface* and falls tragically in love with Tony's beloved sister, Cesca.

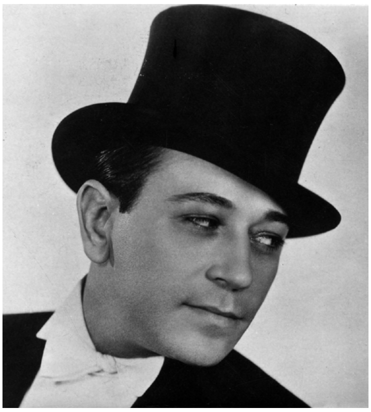


Figure 5.3. Italian German American George Raft, a gangster and a dancer in real life as well as on screen.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Raft reached star status, was cast as a leading man, and paired with popular female stars. As was often the case in Hollywood when the performer was already well known, his experience as a dancer, boxer, and gangster are reflected in his filmography, swinging between musicals and gangster films. In *Night After Night* (Archie Mayo, 1932) with Mae West, he plays an ex-boxer and in *Bolero* (Wesley Ruggles, 1934) and *Rumba* (Marion Gering, 1935), both with Carole Lombard, a professional dancer. Dancing and boxing were activities that required special physical training, compatible, however, with masculinity,[63] to the extent that in *Little Caesar* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1931) the character of Joe Massaro (Douglas Fairbanks Jr.), a dancer turned gangster, was rumored to have been based on Raft himself.

Paramount did try to promote Raft as a romantic tragic hero in *Limehouse Blues* (Alexander Hall, 1934), but this image did not seem to work for him. Raft's career didn't take off until he signed with Warner Bros., where he obtained an advantageous contract and achieved success as a city boy in the dark metropolitan drama *Each Dawn I Die* (William Keighley, 1940). He also played interesting Italian characters in *She Couldn't Take It* (Tay Garnett, 1935), *It Had to Happen* (Roy Del Ruth, 1936), and *They Drive by Night* (Raoul Walsh, 1940). Together with La Rue and Ciannelli, he is the only (at least partially) Italian American performer to have an extensive filmography as a criminal in pre–World War II Hollywood cinema.

Throughout his film career, however, he totaled twenty-two "suspensions." In addition to *The Story of Temple Drake*, he is famous for other roles he refused, including Walsh's *High Sierra*, Huston's *The Maltese Falcon*, and, he claimed, *Casablanca*, all of which "benefited" Bogart.[64]

After World War II, Raft's career went into decline. A television series he produced, *I Am the Law*, was a flop, and he had to accept small parts minor films, in Europe too. In the early 1960s, with a good dose of self-irony, he played gangster Spats Colombo, irritated by coin-flipping mobsters, in Wilder's *Some Like It Hot*; he also had a cameo in Milestone's *Ocean's Eleven*. But the casino he managed in Cuba was shut down by Fidel Castro in 1959, and in the 1960s he was in the hands of the American Internal Revenue Service; the

United Kingdom even refused him an entry visa because of his mafia connections and his questionable management of nightclubs. Trapped in his own gangster image both on and off screen, Raft allowed his life to become a peculiar biopic, *The George Raft Story* (1961).

Most of the few female Italian performers in classical Hollywood who played romantic roles had originally been ballet dancers, but their film careers are quite modest. Maria Gambarelli (La Spezia 1900–Huntington Long Island 1990) worked in various kinds of performance, confirming the dynamism of the media synergies of the 1930s. She was born in Italy, but emigrated as a child, and became a ballerina trained under the supervision of Rosina Galli at the severe Metropolitan dance school, in line with nineteenth-century Italian ballet traditions.[65] She became a protégé of Mr. Rothafel of the Roxy, and in addition to appearing on stage between shows as a dancer and choreographer, she sang as Gamby in the radio program *Roxy's Gang*. In Hollywood, she appeared in the gangster musical *Hooray for Love* (Walter Lang, 1935), and in *Here's to Romance*, Martini's film debut that she choreographed. As a very special "bird of passage" she traveled to Italy and was the coprotagonist of Guazzoni's *Il Dottor Antonio* (1939), but she soon returned to New York and ballet as *prima ballerina* at the Met from 1939 to 1941. "She was known for her gift for pantomime," read her *New York Times* (February 4, 1990) obituary—"her expressive arms and hands, and her blond movie-star looks." In 1955, she was again in Italy and acted in Antonioni's *Le Amiche* as well as in a minor costume film, *Il principe dalla maschera rossa*, an international coproduction. Back in the United States, she appeared in some episodes of the television series *Naked City*.

Francesca Braggiotti too traveled back and forth between the United States and Italy. She came from a family of musicians and when still young moved to Boston, where she became a ballerina.[66] The Braggiotti sisters' exclusive dance school was successful with the upper-class Bostonians, but when her sister Berthe died unexpectedly, Francesca started a career on her own in the theater and Hollywood. In 1929, she married John Cabot Lodge, whom she had met on stage in New England. In Hollywood, she appeared, although uncredited, in *Rasputin and the Empress* (Richard Boleslavsky,1932) and *Little Women* (George Cukor, 1933). She also was the official Italian voice actor for Greta Garbo.

In the mid-1930s, Braggiotti traveled to Italy, together with her husband, to appear in the role of Sofonisba in the Fascist propaganda film *Scipione l'africano* (Carmine Gallone, 1936), a grandiose historical spectacle, rumored to have been cowritten by Mussolini. An American review of the film appreciated her appearance: "The picture also boasts two separate and distinct examples of the sex appeal of the ancient world, in the desirable blond person of Isa Miranda, and in the equally desirable brunette person of Francesca Braggiotti."[67] In a typical American cultural appropriation of the genre, the reviewer notes: "In our own archaic De Mille [*sic*] tradition of the costume film, Miss Braggiotti is superbly undulant—a welcome feminine relief from the masculine speech-making chest-beating." The reviewer, not only unaware that historical films were an Italian staple, was evidently not too familiar with the Punic Wars, and identified a *Duce*-like character not in the Roman general Scipione, but in his enemy Hannibal; he even wrote, "It may be of some historical interest to note that the ancient Romans were in the habit of greeting their generals with the Fascist salute." Actually, it was the Fascist salute that had been taken from the "Roman salute" of pre–World War I Italian historical films.

The article, together with the association of Braggiotti and Lodge with the regime, confirms that some American elites and some Italian expatriates appreciated Fascism, and were not disturbed by its colonial aspirations. In Italy, Braggiotti was also the coprotagonist of *Stasera alle 11*, a bizarre "white telephone" comedy with a mystery plot, written by Soldati and Camerini, in which John Cabot Lodge appeared as well.

Soon afterward, an undated item claimed, "the tensions between Italy and Britain just cost Francesca Braggiotti the most important engagement of her career. They wanted her in Rome to play the lead in a patriotic film, but her husband John Lodge has pictures lined up in England and she turned down her own opportunity so as not to embarrass him."[68] Actually, at the outbreak of hostilities this rather anomalous couple of upper-class performers returned to the United States and worked mostly in summer stock theater in New England.

In the 1950s, John Cabot Lodge started a successful political career, while Francesca Braggiotti abandoned her artistic activities and "danced and organized ballet classes or curated the choreography of special events, such as *gran gala*, benefits, wherever John's political and diplomatic career took them: Washington, Madrid, Hartford or Buenos Aires."[69] A Republican, Lodge was governor of Connecticut from 1951 to 1955 and then ambassador to Spain, Argentina, and Switzerland. The press coverage of Braggiotti's activities refers mostly to this period of her life, reporting her charity or social activities, documented by photos, for instance as the organizer of an event "for Italy's Boy Town."[70] In fact, she was one of the "Italian performers" most often involved in benefits in aid of Italian causes during the Cold War.[71]

Two other Italian dancers arrived in Hollywood in the late 1930s: Sandra Ravel and Caterina Boratto,[72] but the war interrupted their dreams of film stardom in America.

Italian (and Italian American) contributions to Hollywood cinema bear the traces of the geographic, professional, and social origins of the performers; each of them contributed with their physiognomy and different traits to the genres in which they worked, competently as well as unconsciously articulating the complex and flexible Hollywood strategy toward ethnicity. Since their own culture of origin did not "acknowledge" them because they were often "too southern" to be accepted as representatives of Italianness, and because as emigrants they constituted physical evidence of the socioeconomic failure of the Italian unitary state, they did not develop a sense of being a community of "Italians in Hollywood." Even when they were as corpulent and stereotypical as Armetta, and considering the remarkable visibility of their numerous credits, these character actors remained invisible in Italian culture, although sound, through their accents, had given them back the symbolic power of their national identity.

When it came to characters, however, classical Hollywood cinema developed a complex but rigid stereotype of Italianness that was always multifunctional (in comic, pathetic, negative roles), spreading it worldwide so convincingly that at times it was taken up by Italian American performers themselves as if it truly represented them.

Gangsters and Ethnocultural Wars

In the interwar period, the roles Italian and Italian American actors played started changing, both because of transformations in the sociopolitical context and the standardization of commercial, professional, and aesthetic practices in the film industry, especially in film genres. Whereas scholars Lary May and Ian Jarvie argue that classical Hollywood became a melting pot, veiling or erasing ethnic characteristics, Robert Sklar, in *City Boys*, emphasizes the ethnic matrix of the emerging stars (Cagney, Bogart, Garfield) employed in gangster films.[73] Crime films of the 1930s were populated with performers of ethnic origins, including Italians, who rarely portrayed Italian gangsters; that part was given to the eastern European (Jewish) Paul Muni and Edward G. Robinson who portrayed Scarface and Little Caesar. Outbursts of violence and passion were an intrinsic part of these non-Italian actors' performances and became the standard way of depicting (Italian) criminals on screen.

The gangster genre expressed a prejudice that attributes social problems to foreigners, who in this case were often Italian.[74] Although there is no historical justification for this association, in the sense that American criminality was as multiethnic as all other aspects of US social life, identifying the gangster as "Italian" was another manifestation of anti-Italian sentiments (although the story was sometimes told the other way around: Italians were rejected precisely because of their association with organized crime). Nevertheless, American popular media had associated urban criminality with Italians since the 1890s, in order to exploit the sensational actions of the Black Hand and associate them with "exotic" aspects of southern Italian culture regarding religion and the family, thus supporting nativist views.

From a global history point of view, one could argue that the United States itself factors into the equation of Italians with crime, considering that in all other countries with large Italian migrant communities, such as Latin America, the association of Italians with criminality was by no means a given. As a matter of fact, Robert Lombardo has challenged the theory that organized crime was imported to the United States from Sicily,[75] providing historical evidence to demonstrate that it evolved from the political corruption that protected gambling, prostitution, and other illegal activities in Chicago and in large American cities. In fact, the violent (as well as not so numerous) deeds of the Black Hand were dramatized and reinvented by the popular media and backed by an active anti-immigration project.

WASP literature, from gothic novels to Henry James, had already created a potentially negative image of Italians that resonated behind these newspaper stories.[76] In addition, the stereotype of overreacting Italians made it possible to portray their violence as coming from the private world rather than the social space—more a pathology than subversion, thereby camouflaging the socioeconomic matrix of criminality.

Italian gangsters could also be colorful characters. Al Capone, who loved theater and opera, was indeed, from a dramaturgic point of view, a more interesting character than a racketeer fighting to establish economic control over a business. In *Scarface*, the character of Tony Camonte—inspired by Capone—whistles Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Literary undertones (the reference to the Borgias and the Shakespearean plot) and a progression toward tragedy added cultural depth to the picture. Uneducated as he may be, an Italian gangster can appreciate opera, which is only an acquired taste for Americans. Thus, a picturesque Italian gangster could reconcile the two "schizophrenic" images: Italy as the "cradle of the arts" and the disquieting hordes of Italian immigrants.

In *Little Caesar*, the other coeval classic with an Italian gangster as protagonist, the title itself evoked associations of imperial glory and power struggles, moving again in the direction of classic Elizabethan tragedy—a dramatic space which the Italian American gangster still seems to inhabit with naturalness, as *The Godfather II* and *The Sopranos* show.

It has also been argued that, since most gangs included Italian, Jewish, or Irish men, the Jewish Hollywood entrepreneurs chose to focus on Italians to divert attention from their own ethnicity, and also because of some cultural similarities, for example, the shared importance of the mother figure, which made the three ethnicities interchangeable. In fact, in *The Public Enemy* (William Wellman, 1931) the gangster is Irish, like the protagonist, James Cagney.[77]

The family was indeed a fundamental social support in Italian diasporic culture, but American social workers—and the mass media—considered it a pathological Italian institution. Narratives with Italian gangsters insistently (and exceptionally, within the genre's conventions) focus on the family. *Scarface* is a crucial text in relation to the representation of the Italian family, in particular the female characters who unexpectedly entered this genre in the 1930s. The film focuses on Tony's ascent to power within the mob, following step by step, with historical precision, the career of Al Capone and the US gangster wars of the 1920s.[78] The narrative involves the relationship between Tony and Guino, friends and mobsters, and Tony's obsession with his adored sister, Cesca, who falls in love with Guino, arousing her brother's jealousy and leading him to self-destruction. The mother, played by Italian immigrant performer Ines Palange, tries to regulate the complex relationship between brother and sister—the second generation moving toward modernity. However, Palange's characterization differs from the stereotype of Italian mothers: she is a mean Italian mother, tragic and visceral, destined to be defeated in a world whose values she does not understand, especially *moneta* (money) that corrupts her daughter, who squanders it on scandalous dresses; money whose criminal source, from Tony's pockets, she can easily imagine. Like Livia, Tony Soprano's mother, Mrs. Camonte sows discord between Tony and Cesca in a rustic kitchen, with wine flasks and a checkered tablecloth, on a picturesque set immediately evocative of Italianness.[79] Cesca (Ann Dvorak) experiences the same vicissitudes as any second-generation immigrant woman in a socially mobile city, seeking a short cut to money, fashionable clothes, and fun. Cesca is one of the key figures of 1930s' cinema. She meets Guino when, drawn to the music, she looks out of her bedroom window and sees him tossing the coin he is going to give to an organ grinder, stereotypically accompanied by a monkey, in what was presented as the Italian section of the city. At the Paradise night club, she dances happily, just as in *The Man in Blue*, Madge Bellamy "the flower of Naples" danced for Cesare Gravina, to the music of an organ grinder, accompanied by a funny monkey: the persistence of this stereotype is truly remarkable as well as disturbing. But in *The Man in Blue*, the Italian girl was an orphan, still dressed in Italian folk costume, and she had to run away to win her freedom, whereas Cesca is already Americanized and, like Elsie in *Santa Lucia Luntana*, wants to dance to American music and wear fine clothes. Furthermore, Cesca is a sister and a daughter, not an orphan, even though the father is absent. From the narrative point of view, there ought to have been some moral lesson here. Instead, these young women have fun and wear nice clothes, so whatever price their characters pay in the end is easily forgotten.

Thus, American cinema reflected changes in the demographics of Italian emigration since there were very few new arrivals in the 1930s, and most immigrants lived in their family unit. From focusing mainly on male Italian characters, Hollywood gradually began to introduce Italian women, not only as lovers, but as sisters or mothers, although as yet, they were rarely protagonists.

In the 1930s, the Italian family gradually became more visible even in gangster films. This unique role of the family in the narrative became a consolidated characteristic of the Italian gangster film long before *The Godfather* and also played on the double meaning of family and mafia family in the Italian context.

Since the Hays Code allowed the representation of crime, or sin, only on condition that the perpetrator was punished in the end, film gangsters were destined to be imprisoned or die in shame in the final reel. Tony did die tragically in the end, but, although he was shown as a primitive, almost infantile personality, driven by primal instincts verging on incest, the association made in the initial intertitle, between the Borgias of the Renaissance (with its dark links to the Church, incest, power, and internal wars) and the Camonte family, creates a stage worthy of grand opera and contributes to building an epic, romanticized aura around this Italian gangster.

These figures remained carved deep in people's imaginations, together with the association of gangsters with Italian Americans. This connotation, embedded in the genre, triggered adverse reactions both in Italy and in the Italian American community: *Il Giornale d'Italia* in Rome demanded that *Scarface* "be banned" due to the "offensive allusions to Italy" and the Italian American Women's Club requested that all Italian names be deleted from the film.[80] In reaction to these polemics, and to those related to excessive violence and the use of weapons (*Scarface* was a veritable hymn to the machine-gun), the studio added a sequence proposing a discussion on these issues in a newspaper office, thus offering a direct answer to the critics of the film genre. In this scene, the newspaper director states that the problem is not to take the criminals off the front page, but to chase them out of the country, taking for granted that they were foreigners. And a representative of the Italian community comments that gangsters "only bring shame to my people"—which suggests that the film's subtitle "Shame of a Nation" might refer to Italy too. The debate has not changed much since *Scarface*.

The issue of casting in these gangster films is particularly relevant. The three Italian actors in the roles of gangsters—Ciannelli, La Rue, and the part-Italian Raft, did not exhibit the traits of primitive violence typical of the stereotype developed in silent cinema, proposed again by Muni in *Scarface*, and even today a characteristic of the interpretation of "goodfellas." Instead, these performers proposed cruelty in cold blood, with a touch of elegance and, at times, irony. Their performances offered a very particular approach to the image of the Italian gangster: soberer and less mannerist than the many violent (Italian) gangsters of the stereotype that came later—an important variation that enriched the repertoire with potential correctives. It may even have been the very fact that they were Italian Americans that held them back in their performances, making them more metropolitan and modern, more authentic "city boys," ethnic heroes, and less "Sicilian." James Gandolfini and Joe Pesci effectively revisited this cold-blooded approach to playing gangsters, which actually augments the terror in reactions to their deeds. When the Italian gangster was played by a Jewish actor, as in *Scarface* or *Little Caesar*, passions, jealousy, or childish dreams of omnipotence transformed the gangster wars into romanticizing narratives in which the police attack on Tony's armored house became a siege of the "castle" he had constructed for his family, or which culminated in the almost Shakespearean line: "Is this the end of Rico?" in *Little Caesar*. This romanticized image of Italian criminals, from the Black Hand to Al Capone, simply mystifies the anti-Italian prejudice and the anti-immigrationist stance behind it. But it also ends up crystalizing it in the imagination, beyond history, morphed into mythology, thus strengthening the Italian equals mafia binomial.

From Italy to Hollywood

In the 1930s, the resuscitated Italian film industry started to view the American competition with less disdain (or less insecurity) and even succumbed to its charm. Several personalities—including Vittorio Mussolini, Margherita Sarfatti, Goffredo Alessandrini, Luis Trenker, Alfredo Guarini, Luigi Freddi, Emilio Cecchi, and Mario Soldati—visited Hollywood. This was a noteworthy group of intellectuals and artists coming into direct exposure with American culture and Hollywood's mode of production.[81]

Anti-Fascists were not well represented in Hollywood: filmmakers and artists did not leave Italy for the United States for political reasons during either the silent or sound cinema eras. At least, they did not state so publicly.

The regime looked at the American studio system as a model for the industrialization process, especially in the promotion of an Italian star system.[82] And yet, in the 1930s too, Italian actors did not seem particularly eager to go to Hollywood, perhaps because the national film industry was undergoing a phase of recovery and expansion, or, more likely, because few of them could speak English. When they traveled, they moved around Europe, going to Paris and Berlin. No one of the stature of an Emil Jannings or a Marlene Dietrich went to Hollywood from Italy, only lesser known actors made the journey, and they only stayed for brief periods.

Two Italian film actors who worked in American sound films, Tullio Carminati and Rina De Liguoro, were aristocrats; they were perfect for sophisticated comedies and for the grand hotels of 1930s Hollywood films. One of the divas of Italian silent cinema, Countess Rina De Liguoro was a stately dark-haired and dark-eyed beauty as was fashionable at the time in Italy (fig. 5.4). Her brother-in-law, Eugenio, had preceded her in silent Hollywood, but after the coming of sound, he had moved to Chile. In the 1920s, during the

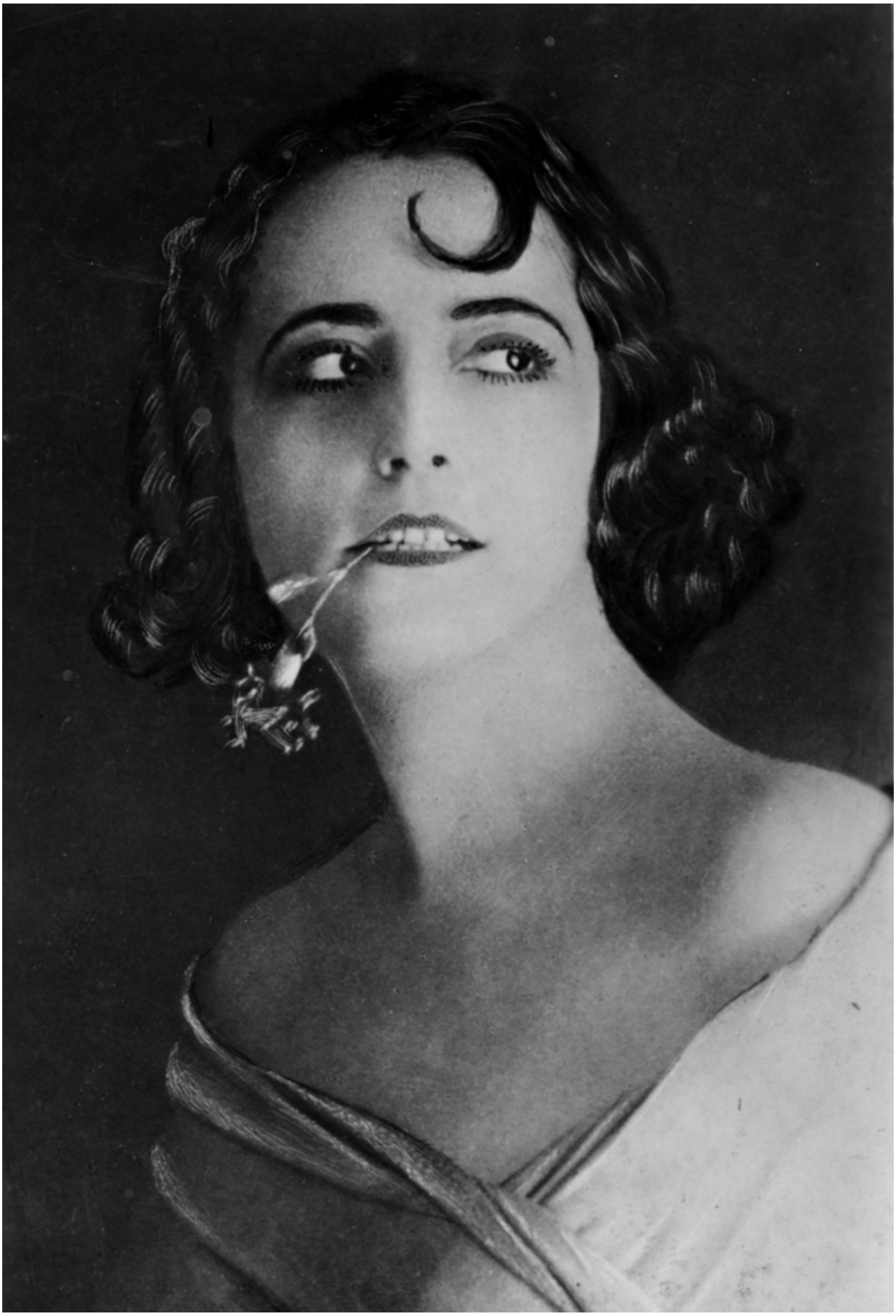


Figure 5.4. Italian silent movie diva Rina De Liguoro, married to Neapolitan actor director Count Wladimiro De Liguoro, had a small role in Cecil B. DeMille's *Madam Satan* (1930).

crisis besetting the Italian film industry, Rina De Liguoro had worked in different European countries: in 1930, she left for California with her daughter Regana. Thanks to Cecil B. DeMille, who was the De Liguoros's main contact in the American film industry, she landed a small part in *Madame Satan* (1930), as "Spain," in the bizarre costume-party taking place on board an airship. (The film also cast another aristocrat, Albert Conti, who added a touch of authentic noblesse to the fiction.) In Leisen's comedy drama, *Behold My Wife*, Rina played Countess Slavotski, and in *Romance* she was Nina, a member of the Italian entourage of Rita Cavallini (Greta Garbo). These were quality productions in which she was credited as Countess De Liguoro, but Rina did not speak much English, and as DeMille complained, she "came too late!" when sound had made spoken language a matter of importance.[83] But she did speak Spanish, so she appeared in some Spanish-language versions of Hollywood films, such as *Politiquerìas*, where she played Oliver Hardy's old "friend." For Rina De Liguoro, success in Hollywood was modest and more a result of her aristocratic connections than her Italian stardom. Disappointed with her American film career, she went back to Italy in 1939. Later, she had some cameo roles in Italian cinema, the last one being an appearance in Luchino Visconti's prestigious *Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*, 1963).

ISA MIRANDA

The only Italian diva to go to Hollywood before World War II was Isa Miranda, the first Italian star created through a modern use of mass media.[84] She was born to a modest family in Milan and was "discovered" through a beauty contest organized by publisher Angelo Rizzoli for the launch of his film company, Novella Film, and his first film, *La signora di tutti*. Adapted from a novel by Salvator Gotta and serialized in one of Rizzoli's popular magazines in a synergy between publishing and cinema that was ahead of its time, the film was directed by respected filmmaker Max Ophüls.

The film magazine *Cinema Illustrazione* introduced Miranda as the winner of Rizzoli's beauty contest on the cover, driving a car, thus presenting her as a very modern woman by Italian standards. The publicity stressed the international quality of the film, including the director's signature, evoking a modern culture of communications, equally distant from the Hollywood commercial model and from provincial Italian productions. In fact, the magazine's cover constituted a ready-made poster of Miranda's beautiful face. The distribution of the film was accompanied by the publication of a record with the soundtrack and a massive promotional campaign, including the printing of postcards, which defined the film "not a colossal in the American meaning of the word" but "an Italian film of international class."[85]

In the mid 1930s, Isa Miranda participated in experiments with sound in Europe, working in very prestigious productions, where she did her own dubbing.[86] Despite refusing to attend a party in honor of Goebbels in Germany, in Italy she starred in the Fascist propaganda film *Scipione l'africano*. Later she explained this performance as a gesture of respect for the regime, necessary at a time when she was awaiting a passport to honor her contract in Hollywood.

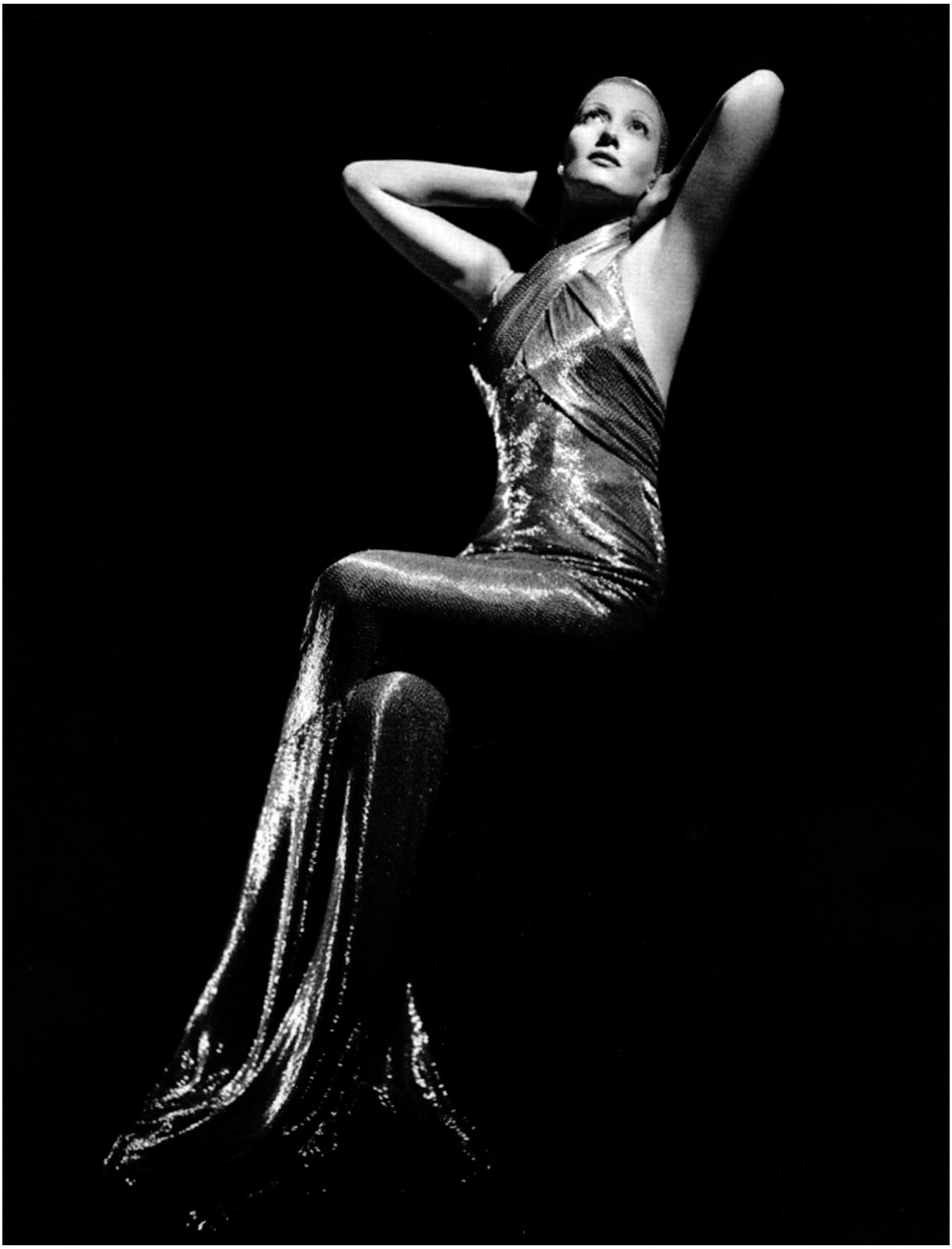


Figure 5.5. In Hollywood, Italian film star Isa Miranda resented to be shown in sexy poses in advertisements.

The Italian press followed Miranda's trip to America with close attention and pride, celebrating the valorization of a natural Italian beauty at the dream factory (fig. 5.5). One of the articles quoted a Max Factor make-up artist saying, "Her face in Italy was always crying. We made her expression more luminous."[87] The Italian magazine *Lo Schermo* agreed with this statement, faulting the depressing stories typical of Italian cinema. "It is . . . the bad bourgeois habit that plagues our cinema, still centered on the *femme fatale.* To be a great actress one has to be 'fatale,' like the silent divas and the small stars of today. But in America it is different."[88] Although the journalist admitted the limitations of Italian cinema, he did not indulge in adulation of Hollywood and concluded: "Americans took away the patina of antiquity and discovered her true face." In this way, he argued, the techniques used to enhance this beauty were Hollywoodish, but "the beauty" was Italian.

Isa Miranda starred in only two films in Hollywood: *Hotel Imperial* (Robert Florey, 1939), a World War I drama set in Galicia, and *Adventure in Diamonds* (George Fitzmaurice, 1940), an action picture about diamond smuggling. *Hotel Imperial* was a remake of Stiller's silent film with Pola Negri and had gone into production two years earlier, first with Marlene Dietrich and Charles Boyer, and later as a project for Margaret Sullavan, supervised by Lubitsch. Only after several attempts and many scripts was the role given to Miranda, who had just arrived in Hollywood, and she was paired with Ray Milland. But Paramount's investment in Miranda did not seem to be in line with typical American efficiency. Since one of the secondary objectives in enlisting an international star would have been to better penetrate the related national market, and since *Hotel Imperial* was produced between late October and December 1938 (according to the *AFI Catalog*), it coincided with the moment the studios affiliated with the MPPDA decided to pull out of the autarchic Italian market. Paramount therefore organized a specific launch targeting Italians in America: "Information and photographs concerning the American film debut of the Continental star Isa Miranda, have been conveyed to 3,750,000 persons in the U.S. of Italian origins and recent descent. The material was serviced to nearly 100 Italian-language newspapers and periodicals throughout the country by Paramount Studio Publicity Department, for use by the publication and their many affiliated radio outlets."[89] This item confirms that by 1939, the media organization of the Italian community in the United States was efficient and probably supported by the regime (since it was able to reach almost four million Italians abroad), although it does not give any reason for this intensified campaign, which appears to center specifically on Miranda, and is quite unique in this study. The article continued: "Miss Miranda's first American film venture is 'Hotel Imperial.' . . . The interest of her compatriots in Miss Miranda was heightened when the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio described her as 'the most glamorous woman in the world today' and a fit successor to the immortal Duse. Agostino Borgato, who was leading man to Duse in some of her stage triumphs, appears with Miss Miranda in early scenes of her new picture." The journalist therefore associated the actress with two international symbols of Italian high culture—D'Annunzio and Duse—probably to impress her American compatriots.

The promotional campaign included a series of illustrated articles in fan magazines, which the actress did not appreciate because they presented her as another Marlene Dietrich. "They always tried to compare me with Dietrich and Garbo, but I would have none of it," stated the resentful actress years later. "Even in Hollywood the first thing I said was, 'Marlene Dietrich is beautiful, but I am Isa Miranda.'"[90]

In an interview entitled "Miranda Slaps Back," she also expressed her difficulty with sexy glamorization:

> Isa Miranda is fed up with the Hollywood taste in sex appeal. Europeans, says the star of "Hotel Imperial," take their sex appeal as they sip old brandy—with a connoisseur's appreciation. Americans, to judge by the demands of her publicity agents, want "oomph" in a gaudy package of leg art and bathing suits. European actresses put their passion into their performances and the stills are used for publicity. When "PIC" Bob Wallace went to Miranda's Hollywood home for a series of shots, Miranda was grim. "I'll give you leg art as the American agents want it. I'll show the leg as far as the Hays Office allows."[91]

The article used photos from both her European and American work: some pictures of her European films, and, on the next page (introduced by the title "When she came to America") images documenting how American publicity agents "made her look like every star in Hollywood" with multiple standardized poses. In the interview, she intelligently argued: "American publicity art builds up an off-screen character for an actress that may be quite unlike the roles she will play in films. So her movie performance will disappoint the public." To make her point, this section used photos of her in sexy poses, showing her legs or in a bathing suit, or in a backless gown at the stove: "Kitchen Publicity is an inevitable ordeal for anyone going to Hollywood. Miranda likes cooking but not in her elegant evening gown." While her arguments were reasonable, she showed considerable courage in stating them publically, but her attitudes probably irritated Paramount. In fact, she was supposed to appear in other films for the studio, including *The Magnificent Fraud* (again with Florey) and *Zaza*, but both projects fell through; in *Zaza* she was replaced by Claudette Colbert after only three days of shooting. According to the *New York Times*, Paramount gave "health reasons" for the new casting to avoid acknowledging that the actress was "miscast and temperamental." The *Hollywood Reporter* instead mentioned a "nervous breakdown" as the reason for her substitution.[92] Between the lines, there is confirmation that she was considered "difficult" for Hollywood standards, because she was too "continental" and outspoken.

Alfredo Guarini, Miranda's husband and a film producer, with her in Hollywood, stated instead that her unsuccessful American experience was due to changes in management at Paramount.[93] The version officially proposed in Italy is that they decided to return home because Guarini had learnt that Miranda's mother was ill, but obviously the growing international tensions and dissatisfaction with Hollywood played a crucial role in their decision.

In late 1939, Italy was not yet at war when, on board the *Rex*, Guarini and Miranda learnt that the Italian authorities had blocked her passport; on her arrival in Naples there were no crowds or newspapers waiting for the returning star. The Fascist regime was irritated, in Guarini's opinion, over an anti-Nazi statement the star had made in an American interview.[94] Film historian Elena Mosconi interpreted this ambiguous situation arguing that Fascism considered her return a defeat, as if Italian cinema had failed in Hollywood. Or perhaps it was an insult to Goebbels that had led to Miranda's marginalization. In any case, it is difficult to assess these reasons or to understand to what extent they had to do with international tensions and, most of all, with the autarchic *Legge Alfieri*, which forced the American majors to retreat from the then profitable Italian market, losing their interest in the utilization of an Italian star.

During the Fascist Republic of Salò, Miranda worked on stage with her own company in liberated areas. Regardless of what one reads into her experience in Hollywood, it seems that she was as uneasy about Fascism as about the studio system.

The "temperamental star" is a constant stereotype, but in those years other European actresses could not accept to lose control over their own image, as imposed by the American star system with its standardizing approach, exaggerated make-up, and typecasting. If Garbo and Dietrich, who had left Europe earlier, seemed to have integrated perfectly into the Hollywood star system, Isa Miranda and French performers Danielle Darrieux, Michèle Morgan, and Micheline Presle did not adapt, as documented by Geneviève Sellier.[95] But when they returned home to a Europe at war, like Miranda, they encountered professional difficulties, because of they had been "tainted" by Hollywood.

Before and after her experience in Hollywood, Miranda had never had problems with the European directors she worked with, and even adapted to lesser roles in later phases of her career. "This was part of my personality, and my desire not to tire my audience, by repeating myself," she stated, criticizing typecasting. "I never wanted to be a star. . . . I am an actress, and a very presumptuous one."[96] This statement and her filmography confirm that she was not at all the "temperamental star" she was made out to be.

Miranda's American films did not change the way Italian women were represented, given the European roles she played and her self-representation as a European Italian. Her international flair and her northern image, blonde and fair, made her a weak candidate in the representation of stereotypical Italian women—unlike Anna Magnani and Sophia Loren in the 1950s who appeared to incarnate Italianness, given their dark hair and their curvaceous figures.

In classical Hollywood, the interaction between the star system and national identity was not linear, as the studio system hid its own production mechanisms: a star was "made" at the dream factory and was therefore both a-national and at the same time a very American product. American cinema exploited the nationality or ethnicity of stars in order to maximize their marketability, but not all European actors felt comfortable with this mechanism. Instead, the rich interaction of Italian performers and filmmakers with European film industries in the late 1920s and in the 1930s confirms their definite preference for the continental side of transatlantic film culture.

TULLIO CARMINATI

When Count Tullio Carminati returned to Hollywood, he found the film experience there more satisfying than at the time of silent cinema "since 'talkies' are a much closer relative of spoken drama."[97] In the 1930s, Carminati, who was an elegant man with a northern look (blond hair, blue eyes) and a polyglot actor, had several coprotagonist parts in Hollywood. He played Count Mario Carnini in LaCava's weepie *Gallant Lady*; the rival in love, Victor LaMaire, in the musical *Moulin Rouge* (Sidney Lanfield, 1934) with Constance Bennett; the playboy Nicky Kerry, protagonist of *Let's Live Tonight* (Victor Schertzinger, 1935) with Lilian Harvey; and Count D'Orlando in Milestone's musical *Paris in Spring*. But his most successful role was Giulio, the music teacher, in *One Night of Love* (Victor Schertzinger, 1934), a musical with Grace Moore set in Milan, Vienna, and New York.

In the interwar years, Carminati had become an international star: he worked in British, Italian, and French cinema, as well as on stage in both Europe and the United States. The reviews of his activities breathe the same cosmopolitan air as the sets of his American films. In an interview, the actor, at that time working on Broadway and identifying himself more as a stage actor, compared European and American theater, claiming that typecasting could not exist in Italian theater, where the audience would get bored with seeing its favorite performers in parts that seemed too similar. "I don't care whether a role is villainous or virtuous, so long as it is active and full of blood and sentiment," he insisted, moving beyond the naïve consideration of the positive or negative moral position of the character, to stress instead the importance of a dramatically interesting part.[98]

Carminati also discussed the dilemma of actors torn between screen and stage, unsurprisingly assigning the theater a higher position in the hierarchy of *spettacolo* and even regretting that he could not become a director, as happened frequently in Italy. Like Miranda, he was looking for more control over his work, but in cultural terms, something that differed from the labor struggles of Hollywood actors, who were fighting to establish their union, the Screen Actors Guild, at the time.

In the same interview, with more than a trace of nationalism, Carminati argued that Italian theater was technically superior in terms of mechanical equipment, lighting, scenery, and, obviously enough, stage traditions. Thus, Miranda and Carminati identify with the values of Italian (and European) theater and cinema, showing a greater awareness of their professional status with respect to their colleagues from the immigrant stage as well as in relation to the acting profession in Hollywood.

Carminati also discussed the issue of accent, defending his American interpretations characterized by a marked foreign (Italian or French) accent that had made him, according to the paper, "the 'foreigner' par excellence," in Hollywood.[99] "'Accents can be attractive,' said a tanned and sport-attired Carminati in his suite at the Devon, appending modestly, or 'should I say accents need not disturb one. I should mind it, though if they could say I'm a Frenchman, or an Italian or a Spaniard or a Russian. That would mean my accent was racially pronounced." The adverb *racially* reveals unexpected connotations when used by an Italian actor, given that an accent would "only" have been a question of diction in Italy. In another interview he noted that, when he saw the rushes of his Italian film *Marcia nuziale* (Mario Bonnard, 1935), "he discovered that his Italian had become tinged with an American accent, and there had to be retakes while he spoke his native tongue with greater care."[100] He had indeed appropriated the regime's linguistic purism in relation to spoken Italian, and absorbed its ideological—nationalist and anti-southern—prejudices. And yet the article described him as a "volatile and gesticulating sort of Latin, given to quick fits of temper, but polished, simple, and suave in his saner moments. The qualities he likes best in people are spontaneity and simplicity." In the background, the Italian stereotype remains, revealed by the two adjectives most often associated with Italians: *temperamental* and *spontaneous*. In his case, the dialectic between (Italian) spontaneity and European (and aristocratic) sophistication was at the core of his characters, often dukes and counts who were, at the same time, passionate lovers. The American press always emphasized the fact that he was a real count, while Carminati insisted on his annoyance with Hollywood typecasting that forced him to play aristocrats whereas he would rather "be an acrobat" as he had been allowed to be in British cinema.[101] In this interview, the actor also expressed a positive attitude toward Fascism, since in Italy "he found everything much changed. Mussolini has made tremendous strides in rebuilding Italy, and he has managed to inspire the people with a new confidence in the future." He eulogized Forzano, a dramatist very close to Il Duce, and stated that he might have gone "to Italy to make a movie for Mussolini." Until the colonization of Ethiopia and the alliance with Nazism, Mussolini's popularity, identified abroad with the modernization of the country and the role of peacekeeper, encouraged Italians in the United States to express appreciation for the regime, superimposing Fascism onto nationalism. Moreover, the regime was intervening directly in the cultural life of emigrants and was taking a more active role in defending the image of Italy abroad.[102] In this context, it is very difficult to establish whether open support of Fascism by individual performers and institutions such as Italian radio or newspapers was authentic: regime and country were blurred together and loyalty toward the latter could imply a not so well-informed consensus about Fascism.

In 1940, Carminati was back in Hollywood in the role of a French baron in *Safari*, but Pearl Harbor interrupted his American career, even though the circumstances of his "arrest" are not clear. An item in the press reported: "Tullio Carminati, socialite actor, and his cousin, Eldorado Ratti, who were interned on Ellis Island, will return to Italy next month. Under the surveillance of Federal agents, they are cleaning out their apartment and packing their trunks in New York."[103] Another article informed: "He is at Ellis Island because of his Fascist sympathies. Carminati never was secretive about those sympathies. . . . A few years ago he and Miriam Hopkins were scheduled to appear at White Plains in 'The Guardsmen.' Miss Hopkins heard him admire Fascism and called off the scheduled production."[104] The *Sunday Mirror* on the other hand reported that an FBI agent in New York "said a total of 499 enemy aliens had been rounded up, including 75 Italians, 159 Germans, 265 Japs," and that Carminati was among them.[105] Another clipping stated, "Tullio Carminati, the singer who returned voluntarily to Fascist Italy in an exchange of internees, now is in Rome where he writes to his former friends here via V-Mail."[106] Thus Carminati was a victim of the first wave of anti-Italian war legislation, when "600,000 non-naturalized Italians were considered 'enemy aliens' and subjected to residential and occupational restrictions."[107]

Repatriated in 1942, Carminati never returned to Hollywood. On the contrary, in 1946 he worked on stage with (anti-Fascist) Luchino Visconti and played Fra' Domenico in Rossellini's *Joan d'Arc* with Ingrid Bergman, both on stage and in film. Later, he also acted in some American productions in Italy, such as William Wylers's *Roman Holiday* (1953), where he was general Provno, and King Vidor's *War and Peace* (1956), in which he played Prince Vasili. The 1941 episode was conveniently ignored on both sides of the Atlantic when the Cold War transformed US-Italy relations.

Carminati and Miranda had star billing and played lead roles in their American films because they had gone to Hollywood on the basis of their international popularity rather than as Italian performers. Furthermore, their Italianness was "made in Italy" so they were "imported" as valuable goods: they were not immigrants. Contrary to what used to happen in the silent film era, when a "local" Italian star such as Maiori could be considered an "Italian actor," in the 1930s Armetta was (from the point of view of class) a different "Italian" and played more marginal roles than the continental performers Miranda and Carminati. Besides, with their blond hair and pale complexions, Carminati and Miranda were not Latin types, yet they did not take much advantage of this, nor did they have a real chance to exploit it.

One Italian film personality who could have added a twist to this narrative was Vittorio De Sica—had he ever made it to Hollywood in 1936. There is a screen test of his, made for Fox that was probably shot (in Italy) when the studio bought the rights for the American version of *Darò un milione*, De Sica's great hit performance in Italy. In the test, he sings *Blue Moon* in a charming and rather approximate rendition in English; but nothing ever came of this attempt.[108]

From the Immigrant Stage to Hollywood

Whereas the direct import of Italian stars was met with limited success, the Italian immigrant stage was fairly active throughout the 1930s, and a few representatives from Italian theatrical families in the United States, such as Rosina Galli and Inez Palange, started working regularly with the studios.

ROSINA GALLI

Born into a typical Italian theatrical family, Rosina Fiorini Galli (Venice 1906–Madrid 1969) appeared on the immigrant stage as a child; later she entered the prestigious Silvio Minciotti Company. She married Augusto Galli, and, like him, worked as a voice actor, first in Hollywood, then in Italy, where the couple returned in 1932. In Rome, Augusto supervised dubbing at MGM, and she gave her voice to Joan Crawford, Myrna Loy, and Marie Dressler, while also playing leading roles in contemporary Italian theater. In 1935, the Gallis returned to California, where Rosina's film career took off. Her filmography includes forty films; she played Garbo's maid in *Conquest* (Clarence Brown, 1937) and assisted Christine, the victim of the Phantom's crazed love, in *The Phantom of the Opera* (Arthur Lubin, 1943). She also appeared as a waitress in William Dieterle's *Blockade* (1938) and acted alongside other Italian performers in *I'll Give A Million* (Walter Lang, 1938), *Fisherman Wharf* (Bernard Vorhaus, 1939) and *The Man Who Talked Too Much* (Vincent Sherman, 1940), twice as Armetta's wife, often playing Italian characters, or, occasionally, Hispanics.

Galli's work on stage continued too. In November 1941, she was the protagonist of a Broadway production of *Walk Into My Parlor*, the story of an Italian family living in the Chicago tenements. Here she played the mother of a very young Richard Conte, and the wife of Silvio Minciotti. Thus, we see a direct link between Italian American Richard

Conte, who appeared in many Italian roles in Hollywood films in the 1940s and 1950s, and the world of Italian *spettacolo* in the United States.

During World War II, Galli had small, often uncredited parts in prestigious pictures, including *The Adventures of Mark Twain* (Irving Rapper, 1944) and *Yolanda and the Thief* (Vincent Minnelli, 1945), but, above all she played Rosa in *Star in the Night* (Don Siegel, 1945) an Academy Award–winning short, centered on an Italian American family in a Nativity-type scene.[109]

INEZ PALANGE

Inez Palange (Naples 1889–Los Angeles 1962) was an important figure in both the immigrant theater and Italian radio in the United States, starting in 1910 until the 1950s. Her film debut had been *Sei tu l'amore?*, after which she worked regularly in American cinema. She was the first Italian immigrant actress to consistently play Italian characters. In most of her seventy-five credits, she was an archetypical Italian "mamma," in particular the disquieting Mrs. Camonte in *Scarface* as well as Signora Carlucci in John Ford's *Pilgrimage* (1933). She also appeared, at times uncredited, in a number of prestigious pictures. Between 1942 and 1945 no credits appear with her name, but she acted in *Bell for Adano* (John Hersey, 1944) and *Unconquered* (1947), Cecil B. DeMille's epic tale of the west, as well as in some television series in the 1950s.

Thus, in the 1930s and 1940s, when Rosina Galli and Inez Palange played Italian mamas, Hollywood cinema began to portray Italian families with their trials and tribulations, and with an almost pathological intimacy, as in *Scarface*, for example. In classical Hollywood cinema at that time, a few Italian actresses played mothers or maids, but they had no memorable romantic roles, whereas Italian men were more numerous and at times had important parts, as if cinema followed, in casting, the steps of immigration—young male adults first, then families.

Analysis of the filmographies shows that, in sound cinema, the Italian stereotype began to change: performers appeared in gangster musicals with comic touches, in everyday life family dramas, and, above all, in musical comedies. One may add to this analysis the filmography of Lou Costello (born Cristillo) from Patterson, New Jersey, the roly-poly comic of the Abbott and Costello duo, to slightly tip the balance of the genres in favor of comedy.

A Watershed Moment: World War II

According to Rudolph Vecoli, "World War Two produced permanent changes in the conditions and prospects of Italian Americans. . . . Their sympathy for fascism suddenly stopped because of Italy's declaration of war on the U.S."[110] Actually, the international political climate had changed even before Italy joined the war (in June 1940), corroding the favor surrounding "Mussolini the Modernizer." Anti-Italian sentiments crept back into the United States. "The atmosphere became difficult, Italian American organizations dismembered, the teaching of Italian was abandoned, its use in the press reduced, traditional celebrations suspended and the names of businesses or of the families Anglicized."[111] Italian became the "enemy's language" and some families decided not to use it, even at home. "The records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation . . . reveal that the use of the Italian language was a marker of potential disloyalty during the World War II era."[112] People threw away Italian books or records of Italian songs, interrupting the cultural traditions of the community—a fracture that deeply affects Italian American studies today due to the lack of historic documentation.

After December 1941, given the presence of nationalist and pro-Fascist personalities on Italian radio, there were various purges, arrests, and deportations, and some radio stations were shut down. Fascist propagandist Domenico Trombetta was arrested and "denaturalized," while Ettore Patrizi was "relocated" from San Francisco to Reno, Nevada.[113] Film actor and protagonist of important moments in the history of the Italians in Hollywood, Guido Trento was arrested and imprisoned in the Missoula camp.[114] Information on the forced repatriation, or internment, of Italians from radio and cinema is vague, however, because this humiliating experience was such a source of shame in the community that it is rarely mentioned in biographies. Executive Order 9066 (February 1942), which authorized the internment or repatriation of German, Italian, and Japanese Americans, and the even more severe anti-Italian measures in Canada have recently come under scrutiny.[115] While some historians minimize the issue because these measures involved a comparatively small number of people, were never as drastic as those applied to Japanese Americans, and were lifted in 1942, silence about these punitive regulations—which affected people's lives without trial and in secret—cannot simply be accepted without a word: shame should not fall on the community, but on a system that lost respect for democratic rule due to fear. On the other hand, more than 500,000 Italians went to war wearing US colors—the largest ethno-national group in the US military.[116] In 1942, knowing Italian even became an asset, with the landing in Sicily and the Italian campaign, when the counterespionage agency, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) created a specialized Italian American unit to "conduct military operations and assist local resistance efforts."[117]

The immigrant stage and Italian performers in the United States reacted to the conflict in different ways: Italian actresses Miranda and Boratto returned to Italy before the outbreak of hostilities, while Carminati was arrested as a Fascist fellow traveler and repatriated, and Puglia and Ciannelli acted in democratic propaganda films; but most immigrant performers continued working in Hollywood, though a few names did disappear from the credits.

By the early 1940s the high season of Teatro Italiano was over, and it would never return. Even the popularity of its star, Mimì Aguglia, suffered a severe blow. Invited by Howard Hughes, Aguglia started a Hollywood career with a higher profile, playing, for instance, the role of Guadalupe in the scandalous *The Outlaw* (Howard Hughes, 1943). Her twenty minutes of screen time are the longest part she ever played in a major Hollywood film; it was also a well-designed role for her as the Mexican aunt of sex bomb Rio (Jane Russell). She wears a wig with long dark braiding, and her skin is quite dark; coupled with her Spanish accent, these traits make her a believable Mexican. Her Guadalupe is witty and full of common sense, without the traces of servility normally attributed to ethnic minority characters in American films.

In the same period, it seems that with the help of Italian consul D'Amico, she was supposedly hired as a sort of international "spy" by "Wild Bill" Donovan, a film lawyer who created the OSS.[118] D'Amico's argument to convince her to work for (American) counterespionage was that by assisting them in "getting information," she could help "to defeat Mussolini and return to a peaceful country." "In return," she received American citizenship. Nothing is known of these activities, but at her funeral, D'Amico told her daughter Argentina: "Your mother was not only a great actress, but also a great patriot."[119] This fusion of Italian and American patriotic values, although probably excessively dramatized by her daughter, confirms Aguglia's role as a standard-bearer of Italian culture in the Americas.

There are many examples of Italian artists taking an open pro-American stance: Francesco Pennino enlisted in the Air Warden Service of the US Citizens Defense Corps of New York on October 10, 1941;[120] film and radio star Nino Martini performed packed concerts for the Allied forces in the United States and Europe; actor-director Orazio Cammi staged *Il Ritorno* in September 1942, produced by the War Savings Committee for Americans of Italian Origin; and a theater program indicates that in 1944, Marietta Maiori and Attilio Giovanelli entertained American soldiers in Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn.[121] "Intending to demonstrate their patriotism," wrote Vecoli, "lodges of the Sons of Italy vied in buying war bonds; great numbers of Italian Americans enlisted in the armed forces, and military gold medals hung in the windows of the Little Italies, attesting to the blood tribute paid to the American Republic."[122]

This crisis could have inflicted a fatal blow on Italian theater in the United States, but there are signs of continuity, such as the case of Giorgio Mauri's company operating in the New York area. Unexpectedly, this company continued performing in Italian on stage and radio all throughout the war and was regularly advertised in Italian American papers: it was an evident manifestation of cultural resistance by the Italian community.

A private collection documents the activities of the company from September 1941 to April 1949 through clippings and letters by listeners, thus revealing the interaction between press, radio, and sponsors on the one hand, and new forms of promotion, such as publicity items (calendars, signed photographs) or tickets to the shows, on the other.

With the exception of the difficult season 1940/1941, when Mauri's company performed only on radio, the following season, it performed plays in Italian, first on radio and then on stage. The company included performers who later appeared in quality American films of the post–World War II era, such as Augusta Ciolli, Attilio Barbato, Mario Siletti, and the Minciottis. Mauri's shows and radio programs were advertised and reviewed in *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, *Corriere d'America* and *Il Popolo Italiano*, in articles that were sometimes written in Italian.

Giorgio Mauri was proud "to act in the most beautiful language in the world, and his pride brought him closer to the heart of Italians," wrote *Il Popolo Italiano* (March 24, 1943). "He takes his fever with him wherever he goes; in Italy, in Switzerland, in Africa." Mauri is one of the few Italian actors to reach the immigrant stage at such a late date. The article stressed the difficulties he encountered in making his dream of establishing an Italian theater in the United States come true, but "he developed the idea of reaching the real theater through a process of evolution, educating the audience patiently, allowing it to get a taste for the stage." This "dream" of (re)educating immigrants to appreciate the "Teatro Italiano" was supported by radio sponsors Conti Oil, Pasta Buitoni, and Ronzoni as well as other Italian or Italian American food products advertised on radio WBNX, WOW, WHOM, and WHAT. The attempt to eliminate Fascist culture from Italian radio in the United States did not affect the "Italianized" culture developed in the 1930s, as long as a segment of radio broadcasting (and theatergoers) on the East Coast still supported cultural productions in the "enemy's language."

Mauri's company held stage performances in different venues, not only in regular theaters but also in schools and public spaces. As in traditional immigrant stage and popular theater performances in Italy, the live show also featured Neapolitan or Italian songs (usually an overture by Edo Morelli) and closed with a comedy, with the participation of Farfariello or (Michele) Rapanaro, "'O Barese."

The radio dramas were initially credited to Alberto Santangelo, but after a few programs, a newspaper item revealed that the author was actually a woman. From then on, reviewers rarely failed to remind readers that Santangelo was a woman: "The phenomenon aroused a sense of curiosity and wonder because no Italian woman living in America had ever attempted dramatic literature. And since there was no lack of encouragement, this fine and enthusiastic writer of ours tried her hand once more, with 'L'angelo ferito.'"[123] While the presence and popularity of a woman in such a key creative role was an advance within the gender schemes of the immigrant community, in terms of social settings, Santangelo's work was, both stylistically and thematically, a step backward compared with the representation of the contemporary lives of Italian immigrants in *Santa Lucia luntana*. Her topics were unwanted pregnancies and rivalries between sisters, in dramas often set in an Italian aristocratic milieu.

Mauri's company's activities provided a space for assertion through the use of the mother tongue, as well as their synergy with the radio and the press, during the difficult war years. The company also supported the Italian American war effort throughout the war. In the Mauri clipping folder, a photo documents a *festa danzante*, a ball, in honor of a group of Italian American sailors organized by the Comitato Femminile of the Italian Actors Union (AFL) that included actresses Augusta Ciolli and Ester Cunico-Minciotti who later acted together as the two old ladies in *Marty* (Delbert Mann, 1955; fig. 5.6).

In the winter season from December 1944 to March 1945, the company presented and fervently promoted a drama about Anita Garibaldi:

> This is the woman that Alberta Santangelo brings to the stage as a model spouse and mother. It will be quite a timely commemoration in these days of confusion; art will give her the aura of the prodigious days when Anita lived, and Garibaldi transformed his sword and his valor and that of his men into the formidable instrument that paved the way for the unification of Italy. "Anita Garibaldi" is history but also a novel, a legend, heroism and devotion; it is the heartbeat of the Italy of the last century. It is the passion of our fathers and grandfathers. Men and women of whatever age and social class will tremble

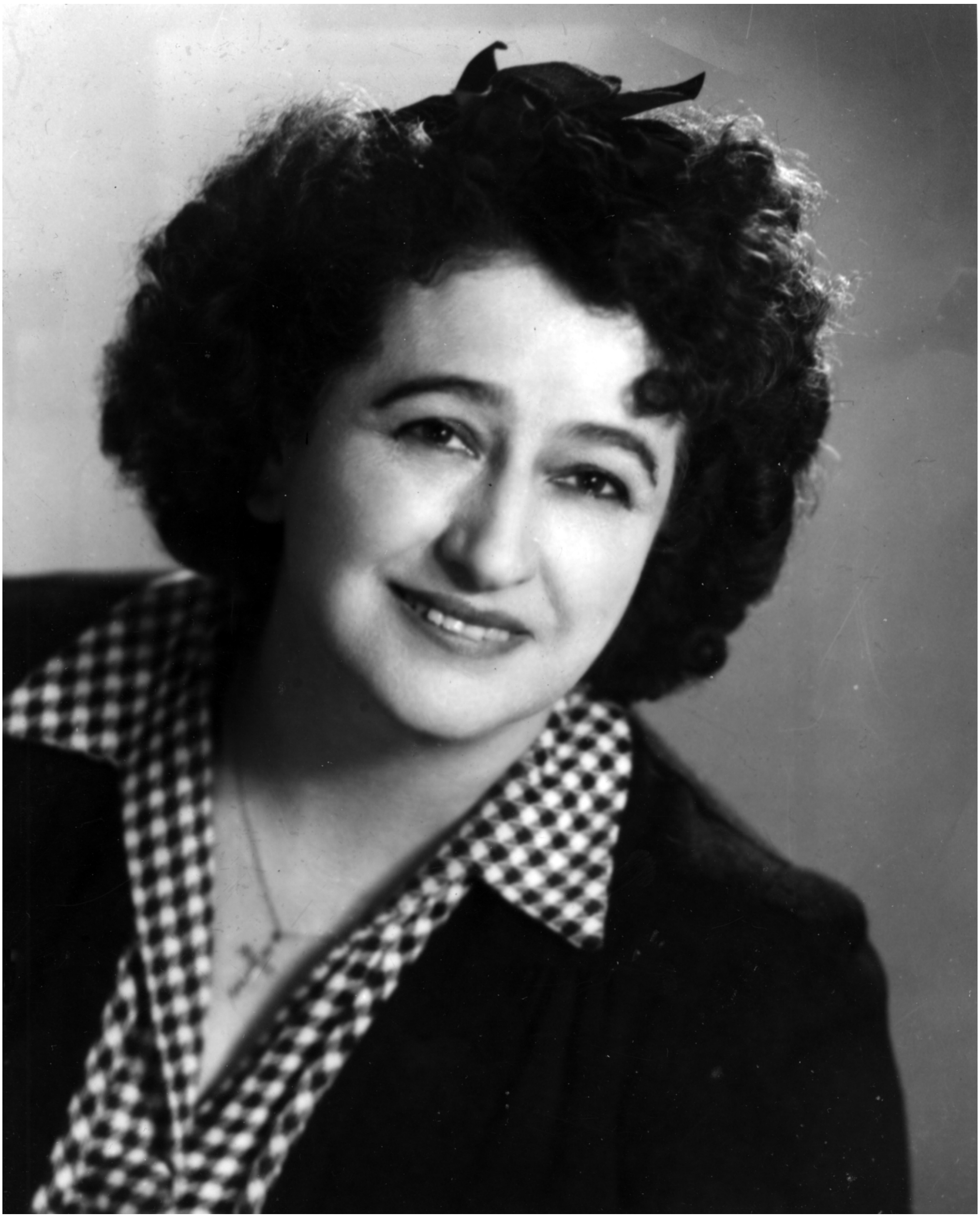


Figure 5.6. Primadonna of the Giorgio Mauri Company, Augusta Ciolli would go on to play Aunt Catherine in *Marty* (1955).

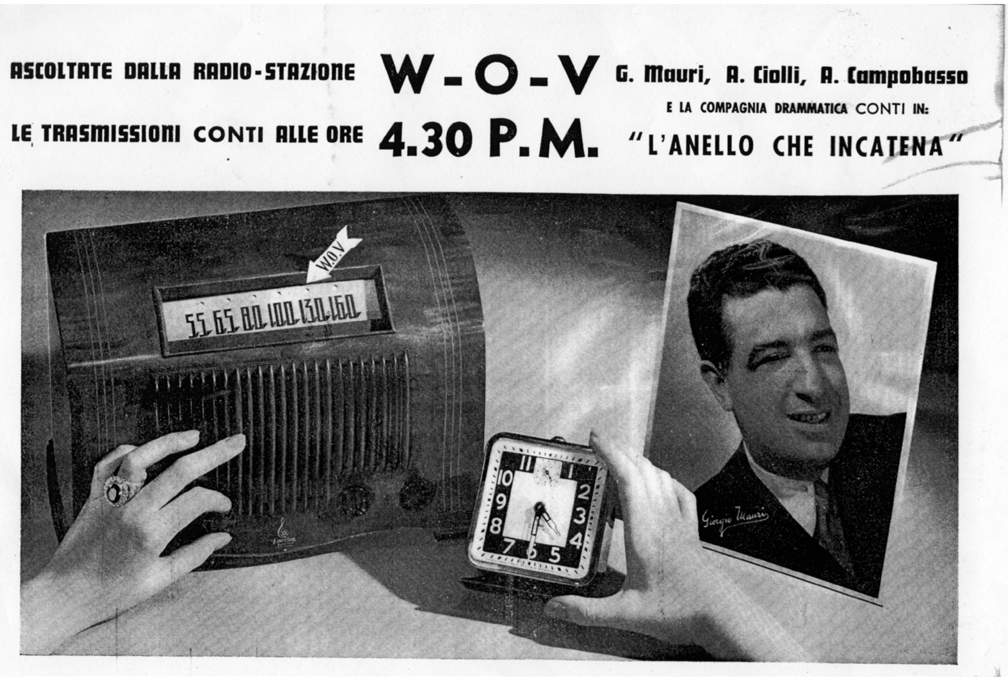
> with enthusiasm and pride in recalling the heroes of that time. The evocation of the sweet but great figure who calmed the hectic and constructive days of Garibaldi, the Cavaliere of Humanity, is most appropriate now, in this hour of slaughter and confusion.[124]

The (ideological) contradictions lurking beneath this promotional article are indicative of the "confusion" in the community: instead of choosing a popular hero, Garibaldi—whose name was used at that time in Italy to identify the communist brigades in the

Resistance—Santangelo focused on a woman, Anita, but presented her in the traditional role of mother and wife. In the article, the repetition of the word *confusion* is indicative of the difficulty of most of the diasporic community to fully make political sense of the events in Italy, with the division between north and south, the Allies, the Resistance, the Fascists, and the Nazis; and the Italian people, caught up in the middle, making difficult choices (fig. 5.7).

Italian Americans also had to make difficult choices: they were barred from the "enemy" mother country, and yet privately they often held on to its values and culture. Paradoxically this process developed a more organic "Italian Americanness," articulating the cultural stimuli the New Deal and Fascist politics had proposed to both segments of the identity (Italian as well as American). Thus, Italian American culture could resist, at least in part, the attack posed by the war, and was ready to implement the epoch-making changes of the postwar period.

At a time when all things Italian seemed to be problematic, there were two phenomena that went against the flow: Louis Prima and Frank Sinatra. Prima's exceptional popularity over the airwaves "represented the new possibility then becoming available to Italian Americans of finding widespread acceptance within the American mainstream while still retaining some sense of ethnic identification," argues Carnevale; "to the wider American audience, Prima's music and persona . . . meshed with the most benign stereotype of Italians as a pleasure loving if somewhat vulgar people who could easily be included within the melting pot."[125] Indeed the situation of the Italian diasporic community in World War



ASCOLTATE DALLA RADIO-STAZIONE **W-O-V** G. Mauri, A. Ciolli, A. Campobasso
E LA COMPAGNIA DRAMMATICA CONTI IN:
LE TRASMISSIONI CONTI ALLE ORE **4.30 P.M.** "L'ANELLO CHE INCATENA"

Figure 5.7. The Giorgio Mauri company performed on radio and live on stage from 1941 to 1949.

II is far more complex than is generally thought, and explains how the community was immediately able to reinvest in national values during the Cold War. In this respect, the role of entertainers, musicians and actors, who did nothing to hide their Italian roots in these difficult times, becomes very significant.

The protagonist of this new Italian American visibility was Frank Sinatra, always a proud representative of the community. That his exceptional popularity began in these very years makes this an interesting moment in cultural history. Indeed, Sinatra's concert at the New York Paramount Theater in October 1944 was "without precedent in mass media American culture . . . [and] caused a near riot among his bobbysoxer fans."[126] He soon became a "bigger star in more media than anyone else in the world," and "one of a very small group that would permanently shift the image of Italian Americans,"[127] a role that automatically casts him as a protagonist to be followed throughout Italian American history (see chapter 6). He had a great impact on standards of music and performance, gender models, and sociopolitical attitudes, always with an innovative—if not revolutionary—approach.

Born in Hoboken, New Jersey, he was the only son of Martin Sinatra from Sicily and Dolly Garavente from Liguria. His father was a small-time boxer and a bootlegger during the Prohibition era; his mother was a midwife and, as a respected member of the local Democratic Party, influenced her son's political sympathies.

Already as a child, Sinatra had been sensitive to anti-Italian prejudice and its racial origins and developed diverse strategies to maintain his loyalty to the community, but also to move beyond it.[128]

Although he dropped out of school and "donned the mask of the wise guy" on the street, at home he studied music and educated himself, perfecting his diction to eliminate a controversial southern Italian accent. He listened to popular Italian American radio star Russ Columbo, yet imitated Bing Crosby. Like Caruso, he had a good voice, but he also trained and exercised it unceasingly and carved out an original position for himself somewhere between crooners and jazz with his swing. Since 1939, he toured first with the Harry James swing band and later with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra. His first records went into the new jukebox and sold incredibly well: in 1941, *Billboard* named him the nation's top vocalist. At this point he decided to leave the Dorsey band to sing solo, even though he had to buy himself out of his contract: he always did things "his way."

According to journalist Pete Hamill: "Sinatra slowly found a way to allow tenderness into the performance while remaining manly. When he finally took command of his own career, he perfected the role of the Tender Tough Guy and passed it on to several generations of Americans. . . . Frank Sinatra created a new model for American masculinity."[129] And one that women loved, fanatically. Like Valentino, his contribution to American gender culture animated the rock-hard stereotype of the American male hero in a way that would become particularly visible in the postwar period, but that, for teenage girls or lonely women whose men were at the front, became the ideal type during World War II.

In the war years, Sinatra hosted two radio shows, had three singles in the top ten, and within his film contract performed in the light World War II home front propaganda *Anchors Aweigh* (George Sidney, 1945), a colorful MGM musical with two sailors on leave, Sinatra and Gene Kelly. Above all, as a committed Democrat, Sinatra campaigned for President

Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1944 and recorded a series of radio spots for the Democratic National Convention, making "a large donation to the Democratic cause." He even named his son Franklin in honor of FDR.[130]

In 1945, he made a short film to fight anti-Semitism, *The House I Live In* by Mervyn LeRoy (uncredited), written by communist screenwriter Albert Maltz. The profits of the film were "funneled into social services."[131] The short won an honorary Academy Award, recognizing the singer's political engagement that continued even after the war. As late as 1956, in an interview with Ed Murrow, he showed FDR's autographed picture first and then his two Oscars, emphasizing that he was awarded the first for *The House I Live In* and that he cherished it more.[132] Sinatra was indeed very sensitive to the themes of equality and race: "When I was young" he explained, "people used to ask me why I sent money to the NAACP and, you know, tried to help, in my own small way. I used to say, 'Because we've been there too, man. It wasn't just black people hanging from the end of those f . . . ropes.'"[133] Thus Sinatra himself related his early commitment to civil rights to his Italian roots. "The children in the backyard / All races and religions / That's America to me" he sang in *The House I Live In*. The fight against prejudice—in this case anti-Semitism—sounds sincere because it is fueled by Sinatra's experience of anti-Italian prejudice, but the text insists also on the nationalist theme—America as the unifying factor: "My dad came from Italy but I am an American," he states in the short. Therefore, this song bridges "Italian blood" and American values, giving new meaning to the very idea of being Italian American This text, which perfectly represents the New Deal spirit, was also consonant with the sentiments of most of the Italian American community, which, like Sinatra, took a more active role in national politics in support of the Democratic Party throughout the 1930s and participated in the war in large numbers.

Sinatra's engagement with *The House I Live In* had more immediate implications for relations between the Italian and black communities too. In October 1945, after a riot between Afro-American and Italian American students at the progressive Benjamin Franklin School of East Harlem—a special integrated school created and directed by Leonard Covello and supported by Vito Marcantonio—Sinatra met the students to preach tolerance.[134] He even wrote four essays on racial issues.[135] As Mustazza writes, Sinatra's "transition from pop performer to cultural icon" rests on the values he supported. "Among the most culturally significant of those values was his outspoken belief in the basic dignity of all human beings, regardless of race or ethnic origin or religion."[136]

By 1945, after one of the darkest times in its history, the Italian community had not only found in Frank Sinatra one who could represent American Italianness on the stage, but a representative with a political voice.

SIX

Transnational Neorealism: Toward an Italian American Film Hegemony

> *Open City*, the first film to come out of Italy after the war, ran for twenty-one months at the World [Theatre] and broke the previous New York City records set by *The Birth of a Nation* and *Gone with the Wind*—an unprecedented achievement for a foreign film. . . . Rossellini's film was a public relations triumph for Italy.
>
> —TINO BALIO, *Foreign Film Renaissance 1946–1973*[1]

World War II was a watershed moment for the American and Italian cinemas: like the parting of the Red Sea, it opened up different roles in politics as well as in film for the Italian film industry and for Italian immigrants. Italy and Italian Americans reconnected as international politics assigned the country a central position in Cold War strategies.[2] And—not so indirectly—this new international balance corroborated the "whitening" process of Italians in the United States induced by the "structural mobility" that favored a less controversial ethnic placement.[3]

The Americans Are Coming

In 1945, the cinema was mobilized on all fronts: Americans introduced chewing gum and films as soon as they entered the liberated areas, inundating the Italian screens with their products, while Italian filmmakers documented and narrated the epic and traumatic experience of the Resistance and the problems of the common man in neorealist films.[4] So crucial was the medium that during the last days of the war, the Hollywood majors persuaded the Allied military authorities that Cinecittà could be used as a refugee camp in order to impede the normal functioning of the Italian film industry and facilitate their own film invasion.[5] This is actually one of the reasons why neorealist films were made outside the studios, on location.

From the start, the Cold War had stressed the ideological potential of Hollywood cinema as an antidote to totalitarianism—Nazism, Fascism, and Communism—setting up an Informational Media Guaranty Program linked to the Marshall Plan,[6] the American economic operation devised "to create stability and prosperity" in continental Europe.[7] In 1946, conscious of the role Hollywood cinema was assuming, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) transformed into the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) strategically moved its offices to Washington and instituted the Motion Picture Export Association, the "Little State Department," which would be a stronghold against the protectionist reaction Europeans were trying to set up (such as screening quotas, taxes on dubbing, and freezing box office revenues).[8]

The "Red Peril," together with the demise of colonial empires, reframed the cultural geography of the Western world, repositioning Italy at the border between the West and the (Communist) East as the very shield of the Free World. The peninsula was no longer perceived as "Europe's South"; it became central to the new Europe. This political process attenuated the association of Italy with Africa and created new hopes for southern Italy encouraging a different approach to the *Questione meridionale*, the Southern Question.[9] The South became a great potential narrative too: Visconti shot *La terra trema* in Sicily, and Campania was prominent in Rossellini's work as well as in the nationwide success of the film *'O sole mio*,[10] which led to a rebirth of Neapolitan popular cinema.

Americans too soon made movies in Naples and in Campania, including Robert Siodmak's *The Crimson Pirate* (1952), produced by and starring Burt Lancaster and shot on Ischia; Richard Brooks's *Flame and the Flesh* (1954), with Lana Turner and Pier Angeli; and *It Started in Naples* (1960), with Sophia Loren and Clark Gable. John Huston shot *Beat the Devil* (1953) with Humphrey Bogart, Jennifer Jones, and Gina Lollobrigida in Ravello and on the Amalfi Coast—not too far from the village where he had captured the dramatic images for his World War II documentary, *The Battle of San Pietro*—an experience he described in all its horror in his autobiographic novel, *An Open Book*.[11] Lancaster, Bogart, and Huston had been in Italy during the war, so they were not returning (only) as tourists, but were visiting a country that had personal (and painful) significance for them.

For American film companies—and for the United States in general, since Italy was so dependent on its economic aid as to be defined "America's most faithful ally"—Italy became both a favorite location and the "very best market."[12] Indeed the first "American invasion" was on screen: in 1953, a total of 5,368 American titles circulated in Italy. After 1947, the arrival of Orson Welles to make Ratoff's *Black Magic* paved the way for another invasion, this time by American crews shooting in Italy, making use of their huge Italian box office profits frozen by the Italian government.

Massive distribution of American films was also a response to the great demand from Italian audiences, who wanted to see the pictures they had missed since 1939, when the autarchic law, the *legge Alfieri*, forced the MPPDA companies out of Italy. Italians wanted to see *Gone with the Wind* and discover new stars, but in reality, they were deluged in a senseless backlog of film output. As Ennio Di Nolfo argued, it was "a badly organized offensive with no strategy apart from maximizing profits, and no cultural project apart from a confused pluralism."[13] The cultural impact of this invasion thus brought mixed results.

As a matter of fact, it has been argued that in the postwar years, Italy only underwent partial Americanization, on account of widespread anti-American sentiment.[14] Leftists, who had grown up with the "American myth" in the 1930s, had to distance themselves from it because of their Cold War alliances, while Catholics refused American consumerist materialism, divorce, and unnecessary skin exposure on the screen. Neorealist-oriented film critics defended Italian cinema and unceasingly attacked American films for their unrealistic and glossy portrayals and even criticized Orson Welles for his formalism.[15] Italian film producers and filmmakers reacted to the unfair competition they were facing, since Italian film theaters screened mostly American films. Furthermore, the Marshall Plan, with its implicit ideological goals, supported the construction of "a cinema for every bell tower," that is, for every church, allowing the majors to avail themselves of a mass of parochial theaters too. Initially, Italian audiences—distracted by Hollywood films with glamorous stars, color, luxurious modern set decoration, and happy endings—pushed the gloomy black and white neorealist films to one side. But in the late 1950s, when they were offered the new national product of genre films (melodramas, comedies, musical films, and costume pictures), flanked by auteur films (the Fellini-Visconti-Antonioni triad), they regained their taste for Italian cinema and maintained it well into the 1970s.

The Hollywood/Washington bloc initially won the commercial battle but lost the cultural war, gradually losing its position on the Italian market,[16] and, on the international scene, it was—if not defeated—at least deeply challenged by the stark black-and-white images of neorealist films. And Oscars rained down on Italian cinema, starting with De Sica's *Sciuscià* (1948) and *The Bicycle Thief* (1950), and continuing with Fellini's *La strada* (1957), *Le notti di Cabiria* (1958) and *8½* (1964). Italy has won more Oscars and honorary awards than any other country for best foreign film. In the Italy of 1960, Visconti's *Rocco e suoi fratelli*, Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, and Mario Monicelli's *La Grande Guerra* were not only great films but also box office hits, bringing together audiences and culture at a level rarely seen either before or after in a country otherwise characterized by a profound distance between intellectuals and audiences.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the cultural processes taking place in the new geopolitics of the postwar period, an oppositional Cold War reading of events and nationalist historiographies should be eschewed, exploring instead the multiplicity of (unexpected) relationships between neorealist cinema and the United States, the multidirectionality of the exchanges, but also the deep-rooted mutual cultural prejudices lurking beneath the surface of a political alliance and a cultural renaissance. Such a discursive process requires a high degree of transatlantic agility, moving in and out of Italy and back to the United States in a fragmented narrative.

Neorealism, the Blacklist, and American Producers Abroad

The spirit of the Reconstruction had found moral force and its own self-representation in neorealism. As an intellectual project, developed by left-wing filmmakers, neorealism denounced Nazi-Fascism, inciting reactions among the Italian people through a realistic representation of events, with location shooting and nonprofessional actors. Roberto Rossellini shot *Open City* during the last phase of the German occupation of Rome, recounting both political and popular participation in the Resistance. One year later, his *Paisà* narrated the Allied Italian campaign from the landing in Sicily to the hardships of the winter of 1944, when Italian partisans and Allied military advisers died together, fighting on the Po river.

Neorealist cinema was an innovative way of filming, closer in touch with social reality, both visually and morally. It was the cultural offspring of Soviet cinema, French realism, and the American social films of the 1930s, as well as of the autochthonous tradition of the (southern) *verismo* of Giovanni Verga, presented afresh by Visconti in *La terra trema*.

"Thanks to a handful of films," writes Gian Piero Brunetta, "Italian cinema suddenly became the guiding light of cinematic artistry and a legitimate political and diplomatic representative of a country that was returning to the international stage."[17] Neorealism also interacted with American cinema through its performers (and writers), also impacting on its practices from production to distribution and even on censorship.

Neorealism was the first European "new wave" to reach American and worldwide screens in the postwar period, opening the way, later, for the French *nouvelle vague* and Northern and Eastern European new cinemas that deeply influenced modern film language, proposing more complex narratives and different moral and aesthetic issues.

Perceived as the antithesis to Hollywood, neorealism soon came to represent a transnational idea of filmmaking,[18] but its (unexpected) relations with American personalities and American cinema need to be reconsidered.

A direct American contribution to *Open City* came from Rod Geiger, a member of the US Signal Corps in Italy. He supplied Rossellini with raw stock to make the film and sold the print to two independent distributors, Arthur Mayer and Joseph Burstyn, in New York. Rossellini's next film, *Paisan*, was not only coproduced by Geiger, but cowritten by Fellini and (British-born American) Alfred Hayes, from an idea by Klaus Mann (Thomas Mann's son), who had experienced the various episodes of the film as a member of the Psychological Warfare Branch (PWP) in Italy.[19]

In the meantime, Rod Geiger in New York, who had enlisted Italian American writer Pietro Di Donato for the translation of *Open City*, and was determined to become a film producer, bought the rights to Di Donato's bitter working-class novel, *Christ in Concrete*, and tried to convince Rossellini to make the film in the United States,[20] but the director did not feel comfortable with the proposition and refused. Instead, he filmed Anna Magnani in *L'amore* (1948), two episodes that included *La voix humaine* by Cocteau, and the neorealist religious fairy tale *The Miracle*, which later played an important role in the history of American film censorship.

The impact of the neorealist cinema in the United States is a significant cultural event. "Two men were mainly responsible for introducing Italian neorealism to American filmgoers," notes Tino Balio, "Joseph Burstyn and Bosely Crowther . . . the very influential film critic of the *New York Times*."[21] Laudatory reviews by Crowther supported the activities of distributors Burstyn and Mayer, who actually devised an astute strategy to circulate neorealist films as both artistic and somewhat scandalous products. The texts themselves allowed for this double strategy. Beyond its cultural weight, it is worthy of note that the characters in *Open City* included a lesbian drug addict, Marina, and Pina (Magnani), an unwed but pregnant war widow, and the women often appeared in their petticoats—a representation discouraged by the Hays Code.[22] In the case of *The Bicycle Thief*, having failed to obtain the PCA seal of approval, which allowed the circulation of a film in the majors' theaters, Burstyn undermined the very foundation of the self-censorship system by releasing the film "to mainstream theaters without a seal, following the initial art house run."[23]

These films caused a positive cultural shock on US screens, winning Italian cinema a privileged role among (urban) audiences. "The history of the art film market begins with the release of Rossellini's *Open City* in 1946," Balio writes, "and concludes with the release of Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* in 1973."[24] This remark also reinforces the identification of New York as a geographical mid-point between Italy and Hollywood in this account. Balio defines New York City as "the gateway and launching pad for the market," adding that "the Greater New York run could generate as much as half of the total revenue for a film—sometimes more."[25] (In this instance, the fact that New York was still the largest "Italian city" in the world may have helped too.)

The very success of these neorealist films, together with the aesthetic endorsement of influential film critic André Bazin, paved the way for the international circulation of Italian neorealist cinema, which would have a long-lasting cultural impact. It also encouraged a transnational network of socially engaged filmmakers. After Rossellini's refusal, Geiger went to Hollywood and offered *Christ in Concrete* to Edward Dmytryk, then the rising star of *film gris*, a social cinema with *noirish* tones.[26] Faced with the mounting wave of paranoia instigated by McCarthyism, *Christ in Concrete* was made in London.[27] It was written by Ben Barzman, directed by Dmytryk, and featured Sam Wanamaker—all three were blacklisted—and it had a distinctive neorealist "look."

In 1950, Ben and Norma Barzman moved to France and, with Bernard Vorhaus (and film agent John Weber), set up an independent company, Riviera Films, to make pictures in Europe. The only two titles they produced were shot in Italy: *Luxury Girls* (1953), written by Norma Barzman, directed by Bernard Vorhaus, and released in Italian as *Fanciulle di lusso*; and *A Bottle of Milk* (aka *Stranger on the Prowl*; 1952), written by Ben Barzman, directed by Joseph Losey, and released in Italian as *Imbarco a mezzanotte*.

Strangely enough, *Imbarco a mezzanotte* was shot at Forzano's Tirrenia Studios in Pisa, in a studio run by the Fascist dramatist, the screenwriter of *Camicia Nera* (black shirt) and a personal friend of Mussolini. In the film, a young boy who stole a bottle of milk meets a a murderer on the run (Paul Muni) and they hide together. According to Losey, the set was a *guazzabuglio* (hotchpotch): not only were Communist filmmakers working with Fascist producers, but with "Italian and French actors who could not speak English and had to learn their lines phonetically."[28] In stylistic terms *Stranger on the Prowl*, beautifully photographed by Henry Alekan, evokes neorealism in the outdoor shots, with the boy walking among ruins like Edmund in Berlin in Rossellini's *Germania anno zero* (1948) but in a Pisa still showing the devastation caused by Allied bombing raids and "inhabited" by nonprofessional performers. In the interior shots on the other hand, Losey used extreme angles and contrasted lighting, typical of film noir, coupled with Muni's stylized acting to create a Brechtian distancing effect. The result was a film deemed not "Loseyan" enough to be appreciated by his fans and lacking the immediacy of the neorealist films of that period.

To make matters worse, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) issued a statement calling for a ban on films made in Europe by "communists identified by HUAC [the House Committee on Un-American Activities]," specifically mentioning Riviera's titles. Anticommunist blacklisting in fact found special support in American film unions worried about the intensification of American film activities abroad. At this point, Arthur Krims, a representative of United Artists, the distributor of the films, met with Weber and Vorhaus in Rome, and, deciding not to risk boycotts, he changed the titles to *Imbarco a mezzanotte* and *Fanciulle di lusso*, respectively. As they involved blacklisted artists, he credited them to Italian "fronts": the screenplay of *Luxury Girls* was attributed to Ennio Flaiano (an important journalist, dramatist, and screenwriter, later to be one of the writers of Fellini's *La dolce vita*), who had translated the script, and the direction to Piero Mascetta (Vorhaus's assistant). Losey's directing and Barzman's credits for *Stranger on the Prowl* were attributed to Andrea Forzano, the son of Giovacchino Forzano. When *Luxury Girls* premiered in the United States, the posters with Italian credits and scantily dressed girls recalled the scandalous images previous neorealist films had used in their US promotion, making the film look like an "authentic" Italian product.

Both Riviera's film productions had also been carefully "watched." Norma Barzman said regretfully, "We knew what he [Losey] had to contend with during the filming—including CIA types in Italy watching him and Bernie, and reporting to the US State Department on the production of our two movies."[29] Rebecca Prime adds: "In Britain, France, and Italy, the US government network of informants kept tabs on the blacklisted, reporting their changes of address, their means of employment, even the loudness of their parties."[30]

Given the special position of Italy in the Cold War, it was always under the strict surveillance of CIA agents, but it was also the site of intense CIA activities. Under the leadership of James Jesus Angleton, "Washington embarked on a program of 'psychological' warfare against Italy."[31]

The vicissitudes of the blacklisted in Italy and American film production in general at Cinecittà bring us back to the issue of language and translation, highlighting the role of screenwriters. Indeed, translation was necessary both to prepare the scripts of American films produced in Italy for Italian crews and to translate Italian films for distribution in English-speaking countries. In Italy, three screenwriters, with suitable language skills and a high level of culture, were closely associated with local American productions: Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Ennio Flaiano, and later, Ennio De Concini.[32] D'Amico, one of the writers of De Sica's *Bicycle Thief* and Visconti's favorite collaborator, cowrote *Roman Holiday* and *It Started in Naples*, for example.[33] Her contribution to *Roman Holiday* was not limited to translation, but she helped (grey-listed) director William Wyler with the complexities of location shooting in Rome. In fact, the *Hollywood Reporter* ran a story on Wyler meeting her colleague Cesare Zavattini and Vittorio De Sica, who criticized (blacklisted) Ian McLellan Hunter's script due to "the contrast between the operetta-like treatment of the story . . . and the environment . . . which has its real streets, its real inhabitants, and its own immediate problems."[34] To correct this "contrast," the Italian neorealists showed the American troupe the "real" Rome. Indeed, the scenes where the princess explores the poorer sections of the city recall similar sequences in *Bicycle Thief.*

Another "go-between" screenwriter was Alfred Hayes who, in addition to writing *Paisà*, produced the English subtitles for *The Bicycle Thief* and the script for *Teresa* (1950), directed by Fred Zinnemann. A young Pier Angeli played the role of Teresa, an Italian war bride married to a disturbed war veteran. The film was shot on location in Italy and in New York and starred unknown actors, showing a neorealist influence. In 1953, Hayes's novel, *La ragazza della via Flaminia*, set in Italy and adapted by Irwin Shaw, was turned into *Un acte d'amour*—directed by Anatol Litvak with Kirk Douglas and, in a minor role, Brigitte Bardot—in a French-American coproduction with no Italian location shooting. To put national labels on these productions is virtually impossible; rather it is necessary to follow labyrinthine transnational itineraries within a patchwork of rich, creative, and industrial interrelations.

Among the "translators" working in Italy in the postwar period was Gino Bardi, nephew of Alfredo Bascetta, a Neapolitan composer from the Italian immigrant stage. In the United States, Bardi had been the coeditor of the Communist *L'Unità del Popolo*; he also ran for Congress in 1940. He had enlisted in the US Army in 1942 and then worked for the OSS.[35] During the "Hollywood on the Tiber" years, he translated texts for Visconti and met Welles, but too little is known about his experience to discuss him here.[36] However, the whole experience of Italian Americans who participated in the OSS actions in Italy might deserve closer inspection.[37]

There were also neorealist performers in American films made in Italy, and neorealist filmmakers sometimes used American stars as well: Joseph Mankiewicz's *Barefoot Contessa* cast De Sica's actors Enzo Staiola, the child in *Bicycle Thief*, and Franco Interlenghi from *Sciuscià*. De Sica made *Indiscretion of an American Wife* with Montgomery Clift and Jennifer Jones, coproduced by Columbia (and Selznick), coscripted by Truman Capote, Cesare Zavattini, and, uncredited, Ben Hecht. Even more interesting was the collaboration between photographer and filmmaker Paul Strand and De Sica's screenwriter Zavattini on the neorealist photo-book, *Un Paese*.

Besides Americans' personal interactions with neorealist filmmakers or performers and vice versa, several American social films of the postwar period were permeated by a neorealist stylistic approach. Jules Dassin claimed that *Naked City* "aimed to assimilate aspects of the neorealist social critique," and, referring to *Panic in the Streets*, Elia Kazan argued: "It was our neorealism, exactly at the same time as *Paisà*, but of course in no way as good as *Paisà*."[38] Film gris—the quasi documentary American social films shot on location in the early 1950s—regularly claimed kinship with neorealism, and critics often used the adjective "neorealist" in reviews of this subgenre of film noir.

Unexpectedly, however, the presence of politically conscious American filmmakers in Italy did not create a cultural and political alliance: while exiled American filmmakers played a key role in the birth of British "Free Cinema," traces of their work in Italy are weak. "Hollywood on the Tiber" was a babel, not a gathering ground for the Socialist

International: perhaps in the daily work on the sets, political affiliation was less important than cultural (and possibly technical-professional) traditions and nationality.

Hollywood on the Tiber

The second "American film invasion," that of American crews making films in Italy, began with *Black Magic* (1947), casting Orson Welles as Cagliostro, and ended with the sensational catastrophe of *Cleopatra* (1962). The film productions of "Hollywood on the Tiber" initially included US films produced with frozen funds; in the second phase, the "Mid-Atlantics" coproduced films with Italian companies in order to gain access to Italian state subsidies, coinciding chronologically (mid-1950s) with a sizeable increase in Italian-French or French-Italian coproductions.[39] In the third phase, starting in the late 1950s, Italian producers Carlo Ponti and Dino De Laurentiis became majority partners.

"Hollywood on the Tiber"—comprising Hollywood studios and the independents, blacklisted filmmakers and anticommunist spies, regular Hollywoodians and Roman extras, as well as professionals from both sides of the Atlantic with a wealth of personal experience—formed such a complex situation that it can be described in only the most fragmentary of terms.[40] Furthermore, the American companies shot their films not only "on the Tiber," in Rome, but all over Italy: they did not spend their nights only in Via Veneto, but toured Portofino and the Amalfi Coast, indirectly advertising Italian holidays. This unique story is also full of unexplained contradictions as, for example, the fact that the Italian leftist intelligentsia never welcomed Orson Welles, not even after he met with the leader of the Italian Communist Party, Palmiro Togliatti, and married the aristocratic Italian actress Paola Mori.[41] It is contradictory to say the least, that Joseph Losey made his Italian film under the surname of a Fascist dramatist.

Two exemplary, but very different, cases of American studio productions in Italy, *Quo Vadis?* and *Roman Holiday*, serve to illustrate here the specific transnational characteristics of these "runaway productions," as the Hollywood unions malevolently labeled these films in resentment over Hollywood investment in filmmaking abroad. These two films also represent different political instances: the former exuding Catholic Cold War propaganda, the latter the work of blacklisted screenwriters operating in Italy.

From a narrative point of view, *Quo Vadis?* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1951) was a Catholic epic brimming with martyrs and veiled slaves, with Cold War religious overtones and an American appropriation of Christian "civilization," projected onto the Roman Empire. (Ironically, the film was advertised with the tagline: "The splendor and savagery of the world's wickedest empire!") The film was made in a Jubilee year (1950) and provided the opportunity for an official visit by MGM executives to the pope. Furthermore, it was written by conservative John Lee Mahin and starred anti-Communist Robert Taylor. MGM "used frozen funds to rebuild Cinecittà studios" and to finance the production.[42] Although some refugees were still living in Cinecittà, the gigantic studio built by Mussolini offered MGM nine working stages, a machine shop, a construction department, wardrobe manufacturing, and blacksmith and upholstery shops. Since *Quo Vadis?* was the first Technicolor film to be shot in Italy, all the cameras and lighting equipment came instead from Los Angeles. Italian technicians had to learn how to use this equipment, which led MGM to organize "a school for electricians" that would train Italian gaffers in an effort to overcome language barriers. In art direction, cooperation and exchange prevailed, with discussions on an equal basis between Italians and Americans on set design. Interestingly enough, American film reviews of the film never mentioned that *Quo Vadis?* was actually the remake of one of the most popular Italian silent epics, whose distribution in the United States had a crucial impact in the move from two-reelers to feature-length films. In Italy, however, the making of the film was amply publicized in the fan magazines, emphasizing both the spectacular American production and its Christian message.

The peculiarity of *Roman Holiday* is that it is the only American foreign production to be shot and postproduced entirely in Rome. Funds mostly came from Paramount's "frozen lire," while Liberty Films, the independent company constituted by William Wyler, Frank Capra, and George Stevens, participated only indirectly. For budget reasons, given that Wyler insisted on filming on location, instead of Technicolor it was shot in black and white (which actually made it look less Hollywoodish and more neorealist in the outdoor shots). The economic reason for finishing postproduction in Rome, however, was a new American fiscal clause which required eighteen consecutive months of residency abroad to claim tax exemption—a clause exploited, in this case, by both Wyler and Gregory Peck. (The actor stayed on in Europe also because in Rome he met French-Italian journalist Veronique Passani, whom he would soon marry.)

The shooting of *Roman Holiday* implied various technical difficulties because of the use of real ancient Roman *palazzi* (where lighting equipment was difficult to manage) and crowded exteriors, but it was entrusted to Henry Alekan, who was fairly used to working in these conditions after *Stranger on the Prowl.* When Paramount complained about the slowness of shooting, Wyler argued that it was due to "improvisation," which, he said, "helped the picture considerably." In fact, to obtain immediacy in the exteriors, Wyler shot "scenes and parts of scenes entirely silent . . . with concealed cameras . . . [which was] time-consuming, but [not] . . . too costly as people here [were] experts at this kind of work."[43] This contact between the Italian crew and the American professionals is indicative of exchanges that often took place on these sets, revealing a sort of "neorealismization" in these productions. Shandley notes, "the production begins to share some of the conditions of contemporary Italian cinema aesthetics, at least in terms of overcoming the technical difficulties of on-location shooting."[44] As mentioned earlier, the presence of D'Amico, screenwriter of *Bicycle Thief*, among the writers of *Roman Holiday* confirms this aesthetic (and practical) confluence in a neorealist approach to location shooting.

Furthermore, *Roman Holiday* inaugurated a happy interaction between Italian products and American cinema that went beyond the filmic experience. For instance, at the end of production, Paramount gave Hepburn the entire wardrobe from the film, including hats, shoes, handbags, and jewelry, starting her identification with fashion and a new image of sophistication—made in Italy. The tandem use of the Italian Vespa scooter also had an extraordinary impact on the international popularity of this vehicle. The penetration of Italian fashion, design, and food on the American market was directly connected to the circulation of these films on American screens. In relation to fashion however, it had been the Marshall Plan that had supported the renaissance of the Italian textile industry, and it was the acquisition of its products by the upper strata of distribution chains that brought "made in Italy" to the United States.[45] American stars such as Ava Gardner, who became testimonial of the well-known Fontana sisters, increasingly wore Italian fashion both on screen and in their public appearances.

After the international success of neorealism and the experience of Hollywood on the Tiber, American companies invited Italian performers to perform in American films. Alida Valli, Anna Magnani, Sophia Loren, Pier Angeli and her twin sister Marisa Pavan, Rossano Brazzi, and a crowd of Italian performers crossed the Atlantic, and this time both the Italian and American press took notice of the event.

By contrast, Hollywood star Ingrid Bergman, the protagonist of *Casablanca* and *Notorious*, arrived in Italy and chose to work and live with Roberto Rossellini, creating a transatlantic moral scandal that caused her to be banned from returning to the United States. But it was also a "scandal" that a Hollywood star should agree to look "ugly" and work in a relatively "poor" cinema such as neorealism.

Performers from the immigrant stage were also involved in this transatlantic mobility. Mimì Aguglia, the Minciottis, Rosina Galli, Franco Corsaro, and Eduardo Ciannelli, as well as Italian film actors who had been to Hollywood, such as Tullio Carminati, Isa Miranda and Alberto Rabagliati, all appeared sooner or later in the cast of American films made in Italy. Their proficiency in English explains their casting because American studios shot their films with direct sound. The Italians instead would shoot silent and have the actors dub themselves (or have them dubbed if their accent was not Italian enough) in postproduction.

One of the Italian performers who had worked predominantly in the United States up to World War II was Rosina Galli. She was cast in *Black Magic aka Cagliostro* (Gregory Ratoff, 1949), in *La tratta delle bianche* (Luigi Comencini, 1952), and in *Vulcano* (*Volcano*, William Dieterle, 1950). *Vulcano* is a central text within the personal and aesthetic tensions related to these transnational experiences, as it started "the war of the volcanoes."[46] Produced by prince Alliata's Sicilian company, Panaria, written for Magnani, and to be directed by Rossellini, the project was discarded after the arrival of Ingrid Bergman in Italy and transformed for her into *Stromboli* (Rossellini, 1950). The original script was directed by Dieterle as *Vulcano* and shot in bilingual versions in view of American distribution. In the film, Galli played a worker in a pumice quarry arguing with Anna Magnani. In addition to Rosina Galli, Eduardo Ciannelli appeared in the picture too, consoling the troubled woman played by Magnani, their performances blending harmoniously in a neorealist acting style. This effect was due to their common background in vaudeville as well as on the legitimate stage, but also to hegemonic neorealist aesthetics circulating worldwide.

During the 1950s, there was total transatlantic mobility within the field, which changed the relationship between Hollywood and Italy not only at the structural level, as in the case of the American film productions which used frozen funds, but also at the professional and personal level. From the postwar years on, the journeys of traveling players and filmmakers to and from Italy would become incessant and numerous, to such an extent that they cannot be discussed here.

From being a country isolated by Fascism, this new Italy, born from the Resistance movement, went through reconstruction, supported by the Marshall Plan, to emerge with a new identity during the economic boom. It soon assumed a leading position in the construction of a new Europe. Cultural politics and film in particular played no minor role in this shift, as the large number of Italian-French coproductions attests. For its part, American cinema of the 1950s fought Italian neorealism and television with spectacular products, using bigger screens (CinemaScope) and richer color (Technicolor), whereas European cinema long remained black and white, both as an aesthetic choice and to fight costs.

American film productions in Italy valorized the Beautiful Country, its monuments and its landscapes, through location shooting. But it was not only a "tourist-aesthetic" Italy that emerged on screen: the quality of life, food, and fashion did so too—a new vitality transformed a *Roman Holiday* into a *dolce vita*. Furthermore, location shooting compelled the American film companies to leave the artificial world of the studio and shoot open air in real locations: an aesthetic choice that, together with and because of neorealism, changed the visual world of the big screen forever.

Italians and Italian Americans in Postwar American Cinema

As Scorsese shows in his intense documentary *Il mio viaggio in Italia* (My Voyage to Italy, 1999*)*, neorealist films allowed immigrants to discover a cultural primacy in such an "American" medium as cinema. Scorsese's nostalgia around Italian films refers back to his experience of seeing (edited) versions of Italian films on New York City television in the early 1950s. The television programming was an important signal of a new image of Italy proposed on the American screens, and inaugurated a new relation between the United States and Italy in relation to Italian immigrants.[47] Italian cinema had become more available on US screens, also through the creation of IFE (Italian Film Export Co.).[48] Furthermore, there were also American films made in Italy, proposing landscapes, colors, and flavors of the country. Popular magazines showed Hollywood stars enjoying *la dolce vita* in Via Veneto, acquainting Italian Americans with a new image of their home country.

In the United States, the living conditions of Italian Americans had deeply changed: emigration toward the United States continued,[49] while the war experience had broken the cultural isolation of the community, beneficiary of new opportunities offered by a booming postwar economy. According to Rudolph Vecoli, "In the post-war period, American society underwent a deep transformation. For Italian-Americans, in particular for the second and third generations, these were years of great social and economic mobility. Moving from the Little Italies to the suburbs implied not only joining the middle class, but also meant they had achieved the status of 'whites.'"[50] This factor profoundly affected the social standing of the community in the public sphere. Furthermore, Italian Americans played an active role in Cold War politics. According to Eric Sheen:

> Under pressure to prove its “American” credentials, the Italian American community was encouraged to draw the attention of relatives in Italy to the need to resist Communism if they wished to continue to receive the benefits of their association with the terrestrial paradise. A mass letter writing campaign, orchestrated by the distribution of postage-paid sample letters, argued the evils of Communist domination, but also threatened the loss of American aid. Shortwave radio broadcasts featuring American politicians reciting the horrors of life under the Communist dictatorship; the Voice of America presented appeals from representative figures of both the Hollywood and the Italian American communities, including Frank Sinatra, an active member of leftist organizations until a savage media campaign forced him to renounce his radical affiliations and join the campaign against Italian Communism in 1948.[51]

In 1947, HUAC had investigated Albert Maltz, the writer of *The House I Live In*, but in 1948 Sinatra still supported leftist candidate Henry Wallace and maintained his role in Democratic activities.[52] However, his role as opinion leader within the diasporic community, or at least as social icon—the role in which he is cast in this book—diminished for a time because of the scandals he was involved in (mafia contacts, and his turbulent relationship with Ava Gardner) (fig. 6.1).

The Cold War did reconnect Italian Americans with the mother country, also through the generous dispatch of parcels containing food and American goods. Cheaper transatlantic fares allowed Italian Americans to visit the home country, as tourists as well as returning emigrants. At the same time emigration from Italy reprised, although in smaller numbers.

In the United States, where urban demographics had rapidly changed, areas of early settlement began to experience outward migration in the postwar era, and the cultural life of some Little Italies started to languish. But perhaps there was less of a need to go to small theaters to see Italian performers or to look for a representation of Italian immigrant culture because all of this was being offered by the American media, both on large and small screens and with Italian and Italian American stars.

The American media scene was undergoing a drastic mutation as well. From 1948 to 1970, the American film industry underwent a deep crisis caused by a multiplicity of factors: the (negative) resolution of the antitrust *Paramount Case* brought about the dis-integration of theater chains from the majors, the collapse of the studio system, and new fiscal regulations that made long-term contracts less attractive, not to mention the advent of television. The crisis, however, favored the development of independent productions.[53] By the (late) 1950s, the decline of the American film industry allowed several countries, including Italy, to reappropriate their own screens. It also favored the circulation of Italian (and European) cinema in the United States, exposure which gradually changed the tastes of American audiences.

The period considered here—from 1946 to 1973, that is, from the end of World War II to Scorsese’s *Mean Streets*—chronicles how the anti-Italian prejudice gradually morphed into a different attitude toward Italian Americans. This period bridges the often negative experiences of the past with new opportunities open to Italian American performers and

Figure 6.1. Frank Sinatra with Ava Gardner at the time of their tempestuous marriage.

filmmakers in the 1970s in transition from the ethnic revival of the 1960s to a never-ending "twilight of ethnicity." This period has been amply discussed in literature, especially in relation to film and race issues, but it also included transatlantic journeys, personal filmographies, a story of Oscars and censors, and changing models of performance and representation worthy of attention, albeit dispersed in a disorderly chronology that can be recounted only in fragments.

After World War II, American cinema offered Italian American performers more significant roles, making the representation of the Italian community symbolic of ethnicity. Indeed, "Italian Americans hold a place of strategic importance for questions of ethnicity because of the widely accepted images that swirl around this group. In the popular iconography of ethnicity . . . Italian Americans are depicted as resiliently ethnic and working class. The centerpiece of this description is the presumed family solidarity of Italians, the supposed fruit of a Mediterranean peasant culture that placed a supreme value on loyalty to the family."[54] This is particularly evident in urban melodramas centered on Italian American families, such as *Cry of the City* (Robert Siodmak, 1948), *House of Strangers* (Joseph Mankiewicz, 1949), and *Marty* (Delbert Mann, 1955) which recruited Italian actors from the immigrant stage to play Italian characters.

In the postwar years, Mimì Aguglia, the star of San Francisco's Teatro Italiano, abandoned the stage and took up film and television. In *Cry of the City* (Robert Siodmak, 1948) she played Mama Roma, the mother of a gangster (Richard Conte) who is hunted by implacable policeman Candella (Victor Mature), his childhood friend; both Conte and Mature were Italian Americans. The Italian American setting of the film encouraged a quasi-neorealist approach, but the narrative was the usual plot of a mother between two close friends on opposite sides of the law. In the musical *That Midnight Kiss* (Norman Taurog, 1949) Aguglia played Mario Lanza's mother: although the final part of her career coincided with a new visibility for Italian Americans, the casting stereotype remained rigid and was still divided between music and crime.

In *The Black Hand* (Richard Thorpe, 1950), Italian policeman Columbo (Gene Kelly), modelled on the historical character of Joe Petrosino, fought the eponymous criminal organization. Aguglia played the dignified wife of Carlo Sabellera (Frank Puglia), a shopkeeper who denounces the Black Hand's threats. In Italy, the dubbed version of the film was retitled *La legge del silenzio* (The law of silence), and Mr. Sabellara was renamed Antonescu and dubbed with a Romanian accent, in order to disassociate a story of crime from Italianness; the policeman's fatal trip to Palermo became an improbable mission to Cuba. Therefore, even in the 1950s, the Italian authorities, like the Fascist censors before them, "re-naturalized" Italian immigrants and removed any association of Italians with organized crime. In reality, between 1950 and 1951, the Kefauver Hearings on organized crime were televised, reawakening interest in the Mafia and its working methods. In the history of early television, these hearings proved to be an unexpected success, which did not help to achieve the desired dissociation of the image of the Italian American community from organized crime; on the contrary, it reinforced it.[55]

Again in 1950, Aguglia played in *Deported* (Robert Siodmak, 1950), a film of notable sociological interest. Shot in Italy, it centered on an Italian American gangster reminiscent of Lucky Luciano (who had been deported to Italy in 1946) and Aguglia had a small part as the Italian aunt of gangster Vittorio Sparducci (Jeff Chandler), repatriated by the American authorities.

In 1953, Aguglia played in another "runaway production," *When in Rome* (Clarence Brown, 1952), together with her daughter Argentina, Van Johnson, and another Italian American actor, Joseph Calleia. Aguglia had returned home to be in these films, but with no reaction from the Italian press. Back in the United States, she had a small but significant part in *The Rose Tattoo*, Magnani's first American experience: she was a member of "the chorus," the group of old ladies censoring and supporting Serafina (Magnani) in her widowhood. She leads the group and matches Magnani in naturalist acting.

In *The Brothers Rico* (Phil Karlson, 1957), Aguglia played the part of a grandmother, while Argentina played her daughter in the narrative. She only had a short scene with grandchild Eddie Rico (Richard Conte): she is lying on her bed, watching television, even if, as she explains to him in Italian, she does not understand English. In the original American soundtrack, Aguglia speaks with a good Italian accent, whereas Argentina sounds more "Italian American." Like Eleonora Duse, with whom she was often compared in her youth, Aguglia's film appearances show her as an old woman; but just like her famous Italian colleague she steals the scene even in such small roles as sprightly grandma Rico or dignified signora Sabellera. In between these titles, she also played Latino characters in smaller productions, or elderly Italian ladies in telefilms.

In 1970, Mimì Aguglia died in California at age ninety-one. Like Maiori, she represents a point of contact between the highest experiences of Italian theater in the United States and American cinema, but film, as was the case with many stage actors, was not her first passion. With her contribution to San Francisco's Teatro Italiano, using an acting style of the southern mold transformed into a high point of reference, Aguglia played a key role in the history of Italian culture abroad, but her film work has left only faint historiographic traces.

The careers of Ester (or Esther) Cunico and Silvio Minciotti started as early as Aguglia's and cover the full trajectory of this account too. The Minciottis' prestige transpires in the quality of the movies in which they appeared in the postwar period. Silvio Minciotti performed next to his wife in several of her films; both of them played Italian characters in *The Undercover Man* (Joseph Lewis, 1949), about the capture of Al Capone, in *Strictly Dishonorable* (Melvin Frank, 1951) which was set in the world of opera, and in Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man* (1956). He was on his own in *Deported* (Robert Siodmak, 1950), and played the father of an Italian Monterey fisherman in *Clash by Night* (Fritz Lang, 1952), written by "neorealist" screenwriter Alfred Hayes and Clifford Odets, with Barbara Stanwyck, Robert Ryan, and Marilyn Monroe. Minciotti also appeared in *Serenade* (Anthony Mann, 1956) with Mario Lanza, together with Frank Puglia and Joseph Calleia, all of whom played Italian characters.

His wife Ester was the icon of the Italian mama in several important films of the postwar period, including *Marty* and *Full of Life* (Richard Quine, 1956) following her experience in *House of Strangers* (Joseph Mankiewicz, 1949). This picture was one of the first titles of a subgenre of ethnic melodrama centered on an Italian American family, presented in the conflictual intimate relations typical of its tightly knit world. In *House of Strangers*, Minciotti played the wife of a bossy Italian banker (Edward G. Robinson), with Richard Conte as her son, Max. As the publicity for the film stated, "a number of supporting players came from the New York Italian theater. . . . The picture continues the trend toward the use of foreign language dialogue on screen."[56] Parameters had really changed if the *Italianità* of language, themes, and performers could become a publicity factor. But the Italian community did not appreciate the criminal angle with which it was portrayed in this film, as well as in a number of other social dramas. According to AFI's *Within Our Gates*, the self-censorship office, the Production Code Administration (PCA), highlighted the problem when consulting Eric Johnston, the head of the MPAA:

> In view of the great number of protests which, I understand, you are receiving at the present time against the alleged unfavorable portrayals of Italians and Italian-Americans in motion pictures, I desire to direct your particular attention to [the script of *House of Strangers*.] . . . Almost all the characters are Italians or Italian-Americans, who, when they are not characterized as definitely reprehensible people, are, at least, unsympathetic. . . . With regard to the general overall unfavorable portrayal of the Italian-Americans, it is

> our thought that we have no way under the Code to correct this. It . . . may suggest a question of industry policy and, in accordance with our long-established procedure, we are referring this question to you.[57]

Whereas in the past Italian Americans and the Italian authorities had challenged negative representations of the community with little success, in 1948 the issue was brought directly to the MPAA's attention. Breen's letter was dated December 8, 1948, the year the Cold War broke out. The letter coincided with the American intervention in the Italian elections through the recruitment of Italian Americans by means of a letter campaign. It was also the time when Italians tried to protect their film market through the introduction of the *legge Andreotti*.[58] But the PCA, with its outdated social and moral standards, was under siege on every front, while the crumbling studio system had weakened the coordinating role of the MPAA, upon which the self-censorship office depended: no official decision was made about the representation of Italian Americans.

It took the "comeback" of Frank Sinatra to signal a radical change in the history of Italian American culture, the media system, and various forms of censorship. But from 1947 to 1953, everything fell apart, in the life of the singer: The Hollywood press destroyed his image as a family man, reporting his tempestuous affair with Ava Gardner. He lost his contracts in radio, recording, and movies, and sang to increasingly empty theaters. He attempted suicide, and, in 1950, even lost his voice.

But with characteristic resilience, Sinatra made his mark on this period too. He brought innovation to the media in which he performed: in music, through the arrangements he chose and the interaction with African American musicians, and in film by becoming a producer in order to control the narrative content of his films and attack censorship of any kind (be it institutional, as imposed by the PCA, or political, as exemplified by the McCarthy witch hunt). He was proud of his Italian origins and, as Leonard Mustazza argues, "his transition from pop performer to cultural icon [rested on his values]. . . . Among the most culturally significant of those values was his outspoken belief in the basic dignity of all human beings, regardless of race or ethnic origin or religion."[59] In his more dramatic down period, Sinatra had read *From Here to Eternity*, and strongly identified with the character of Angelo Maggio, slurred by "Fatso" for being a "wop" and a "monkey"—insults that touched a nerve in his view of racial and ethnic tolerance. Notwithstanding his difficulties in obtaining the role,[60] and the hard work it took to manage such a dramatic part, Sinatra convinced critics and audiences with his performance receiving the first Oscar to be awarded to an Italian American actor playing an Italian American character. His acting benefited from the coaching of his friend Montgomery Clift.[61] "You can see the lessons Sinatra absorbed from Clift in his very physicality," Santopietro argues. In fact, physicality, namely the articulate use of body and gesture, is a common characteristic of (southern) Italian performers, singer-actors such as Caruso, or self-taught actors such as Rodolfo Valentino, Henry Armetta, and Sinatra.

The exceptional commercial success of *From Here to Eternity*—a film critical of the military that dealt with prostitution, adultery, corruption, violence, alcohol abuse, murder, and bigotry, once more spotlighted the PCA's inability to reform itself and to find "new directions." With the crisis of the studio system and the divergent interests of producers and theaters, together with the growing influence of more sophisticated foreign films and independent productions, self-censorship was no longer able to function efficiently, and Sinatra himself later contributed to its demise.

THE CRISIS OF SELF-CENSORSHIP AND THE MIRACLE CASE

While New York independent theaters were showing Italian films without the PCA's seal of approval, American censors continued to condemn realistic representations of Italian female characters and to contest the Catholic religiosity of ordinary folk. In particular, the PCA found the scripts of Williams's *The Rose Tattoo* and Fante's *Full of Life* highly objectionable.

In Williams's script, Serafina was an earthy Italian widow, on the cusp between mourning and sensual awakening, but "PCA officials initially rejected it, stating that the story was obsessed 'with lust and gross sex' and confused religion with superstition."[62] Producer Hal Wallis convinced the dramatist to temper the play's sexual aspects and to show that it was Serafina, and not Roman Catholicism itself, who was prone to superstition. In the end, the film was made but only after long, laborious changes.

In September 1950, the PCA rejected Fante's script for *Full of Life*, contesting its treatment of pregnancy: "The problems lie in the many offensive anatomical details of pregnancy."[63] The PCA even added that "the seemingly innocuous title becomes unbelievably vulgar in its connection with the story. It refers to the huge stomach which the girl has in the latter stages of pregnancy, which her husband flippantly calls, 'her white balloon.'"[64] Rewrites of *Full of Life* actually went on until 1956, when the film was, at last, produced.

The censors' neurotic attitudes toward physical manifestations of pregnancy or sensuality resisted changing sociocultural mores, but the real head-on crash came with Anna Magnani and her role in Rosselini's short *The Miracle*. In the film, a vagabond (Federico Fellini, who also wrote the screenplay) seduces a dim-witted peasant woman (Magnani), but she believes he is Saint Joseph, so when she discovers she is pregnant, she thinks it was an "immaculate conception." The villagers mock her, but she flees and gives birth alone in an isolated church.

In the United States, the film won the New York film critics award, but it was first boycotted by American Catholics and later the Legion of Decency intervened and had the license of a theater where it was shown suspended. Distributor Joseph Burstyn continued his fight against this form of censorship and filed a lawsuit.[65] He addressed the Supreme Court, which, in May 1952, handed down the important *Burstyn v. Wilson* judgment, stating that banning the film constituted a "restraint of freedom of speech" and thereby a violation of the First Amendment. *The Miracle* represented a decisive turning point in the history of American film censorship, granting films the protection of the First Amendment. That films would win cultural and communicative legitimation in the United States at such a late date, and thanks to an Italian short film, may come as a surprise, but it also confirms that the MPAA and the PCA were unable to hold out against either the "invasion" of foreign films or the rapid transformation of the tastes of urban audiences. The self-censorship code, which aimed to reach the largest possible audience, did not, and could not, function by that time, and the American film industry soon adopted a system of classification by age group.

ANNA MAGNANI, NEOREALISM, AND THE ACTORS STUDIO

What made Anna Magnani, the protagonist of *The Miracle*, so disturbing and yet fascinating for American audiences? She was the embodiment of diversity compared with the Hollywood star system; she was the incarnation of neorealism, of the "other" cinema (fig 6.2). It was in the vivacious context of "Hollywood on the Tiber" that Tennessee Williams met Anna Magnani among other Italian performers and directors. In 1948, Visconti, who had directed his *The Glass Managerie* on stage in Rome (1946), was shooting *La terra trema* in Sicily and invited Williams.[66] Upon his return to the United States,

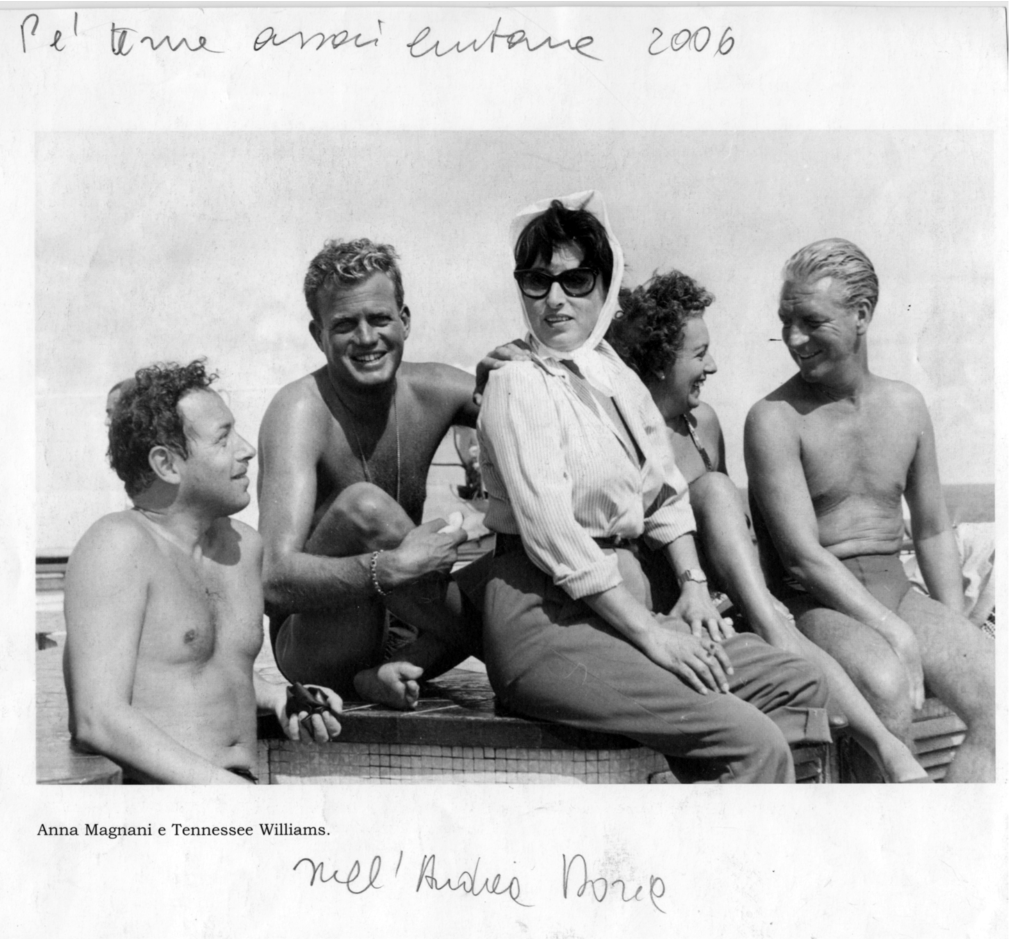

Pe' terre assai lontane 2006
Anna Magnani e Tennessee Williams.
nell'Andrea Doria

Figure 6.2. Anna Magnani and Tennessee Williams on the *Andrea Doria*.

Williams wrote a Sicilian comedy-drama, *The Rose Tattoo*, thinking of Magnani, but the actress felt uncomfortable about performing in English, so the stage version (1951) starred Maureen Stapleton and Eli Wallach. As a film, *The Rose Tattoo* deserves special attention here because of its historical role in the account of Italians in Hollywood, both as characters and performers.

Alongside Magnani, the film cast Burt Lancaster, who had been a circus artist and worked as an entertainer in the Italian campaign with the Fifth Army during World War II.[67] He had produced *The Crimson Pirate* in Italy with his independent company, Hecht-Lancaster, and had starred in *From Here to Eternity* alongside Sinatra. In 1955, Lancaster was among the producers of *Marty* while playing Alvaro in *The Rose Tattoo*. The coincidence is even more remarkable if we consider that the 1956 Academy Award for Best Picture went to his *Marty*, the one for Best Actress to Magnani, and the one for Best Actor to the Italian American Ernest Borgnine, playing Marty.

In an early draft of *The Rose Tattoo*, Williams had written that the play should be produced "not with mere realism but with that poetically expressive treatment of realistic detail which has been called the 'New Realism' as it is portrayed in the Italian films of Di Sica [*sic*] and Rossellini."[68] Indeed a press clipping documents a plan to adapt *The Rose Tattoo* for the screen back in 1952; neorealist director Vittorio De Sica was supposed to direct it, but nothing came of it.[69] The feature film version of *The Rose Tattoo* was directed by Daniel Mann, one of the first teachers at the Actors Studio during its early days.

The Rose Tattoo constitutes a turning point in Williams's work: it is a comedy with a happy ending, but its representational structure is almost experimental in its sudden changes of mood—moving from sensual tension to naïve prayer, from acrobatic farce with Alvaro (Lancaster) to a sociological exploration of generational conflict between (immigrant) mother and daughter. The text even explores Catholic values.

As in a neorealist film, the exteriors involving the Italian community were filmed on location in Key West. The film cast included Sardinian actress Marisa Pavan, Anna Maria Pierangeli's twin sister; they were a very interesting pair of Italian siblings in the transatlantic cinema of the 1950s. Pavan's vibrant performance as Rosa, Serafina's (Magnani) daughter in *The Rose Tattoo*, won her the Golden Globe and gained her an Academy Award nomination. Since Magnani did not attend the Academy Award ceremony Pavan accepted the Oscar on her behalf.

Originally, her more famous sister, Pier Angeli, was supposed to play Rosa. Pier Angeli had appeared in Zinnemann's *Teresa*, winning the Golden Globe for her performance; Alfred Hayes, who cowrote *Paisan*, and screenwriter Stewart Stern were nominated for Academy Awards for the script. Later on, Pier Angeli played *Somebody Up There Likes Me* (Robert Wise, 1956), about boxing legend Rocky Graziano—a role meant for her boyfriend James Dean, but played instead by another method actor, Paul Newman. Thus, with their Italian and American neorealist experiences, and working with alumni of the Actors Studio, the twins contributed to blurring the distinction between neorealism and Method in the American spectators' and critics' perceptions. Marisa and her sister also embody the gradual disappearance of national borders in the increasingly cosmopolitan world of film production in the 1950s.

Among the immigrant performers in *The Rose Tattoo* were Augusta Merighi and Rossana San Marco (who both were also in the Broadway production). They constituted the "chorus," led by father De Leo (immigrant performer Sandro Giglio) and lastly Assunta (Mimì Aguglia).

Like other films dealing with Italian women, *The Rose Tattoo* focuses on the "Italian" polarity of the body (sensuality as well as pregnancy/miscarriage) and religion, both of which were disturbing to the overwhelmingly prudish American mentality, in the highly conformist atmosphere of the 1950s.

Serafina often reacts physically: she slaps Rosa when she accuses her of posing as a baroness, but she also hugs her with animal tenderness. She is presented as a typical first-generation immigrant woman: faithful to traditions, Italian speaking, semi-illiterate, and distrustful of modernity and America. Williams accurately depicts the Italian immigrants' contradictory distrust of American education as the loss of control so feared by parents. The film proposes these sociological observations in a stylistic dialectic between a Pirandellian *grottesco* and Williams's "realism," expressed in the two protagonists' performances: Magnani appearing as the embodiment of neorealism, in contrast with the clownish Lancaster.

Serafina appears in her underwear: first in a sexy black petticoat, getting ready for Rosario, and then in a white one, when she is in mourning. This sexy presentation was not censored, perhaps because the character and the actress were Italian: an ethnoracial factor worthy of some reflection; or because Magnani had already been seen in a petticoat by American audiences in her Italian films. In fact, "foreign films played in art houses and independent theaters where a code seal did not matter," Balio argues. "As a result, foreign films enjoyed one advantage over Hollywood in the United States: sex appeal. From the start, foreign film distributors understood that sex sold films and freely borrowed techniques from the exploitation market to 'sex up' film titles and advertising to lure customers. The added revenue saved many a film."[70]

Although in many ways antithetical to Hollywood cinema, neorealist acting deeply penetrated American films representing Italians or Italian Americans in the 1950s, especially films with Italian performers. A cultural explanation may be found in the common roots of Method acting and Italian naturalism. The naturalistic (or modern) acting style started on the Italian stage with Tommaso Salvini and Eleonora Duse and, as mentioned in chapter 1, Konstantin Stanislavsky developed the Method, the theoretical basis for the Actors Studio, from his study of Italian performers. Williams himself was convinced of the continuity of the two, but while he considered *The Rose Tattoo* a neorealist text, he cast Actors Studio alumni in the Broadway production. Thanks to Magnani, the immigrant performers, and Pavan, however, the film is predominantly neorealist in acting style. By contrast, in *The Fugitive Kind* (Sidney Lumet, 1960), which starred Magnani and Marlon Brando, method acting prevails thanks to the central role of Brando and his mannerisms, the performances of Joanne Woodward and Maureen Stapleton, and the claustrophobic and theatrical mise-en-scène by a director who came from the Actors Studio.

Anna Magnani made another American film, *Wild is the Wind* (George Cukor, 1958), in which she played the neglected second wife of an Italian immigrant (Anthony Quinn) who falls in love with his assistant (Anthony Franciosa). During a country *festa* she sings, in her husky voice, *Scapricciatiello*, a Neapolitan song with a cheerful rhythm but serious lyrics about the dangers of a young man choosing the wrong woman—a worry that haunts his mother and sends her praying for him every morning in church. Magnani sings it while Quinn plays the guitar, but she is looking at Franciosa and thus arouses the young man's mother's suspicions—a subtle *sceneggiata* induced by the popular song. The dynamic between the song and the scene also recalls that Anna Magnani was a vaudeville performer, yet it completely fits the character—a moment of grace, a neorealist bypassing of acting and being, so effective that it would have later echoes in the memory of Italian American filmmakers. Indeed, Martin Scorsese used this very Neapolitan song at the beginning of *Mean Streets*, when Charlie is divided between his religious obsession and his attraction to the dangers of street life.[71] John Turturro, on the other hand, used Connie Francis's interpretation of the song ("Do You Love Me the Way You Kiss Me") in Kate Winslet's "number" as the hooker who leaves Gandolfini, in *Romance and Cigarettes*. Traces of a past Italian *cultura dello spettacolo* become denser in contemporary American films.

MAMA ESTHER IN *MARTY* AND *FULL OF LIFE*

In 1955, the Italian immigrant performer Esther Minciotti played Teresa, the mother of shy butcher Marty in the televised and film versions of Paddy Chayefsky's work—a "neorealist" portrayal of the immigrant community, showing its matriarchal characteristics. Augusta Ciolli, from the Giorgio Mauri company, played Aunt Catherine, often engaged with her sister Teresa in funny and yet moving discussions about family members, old sick or dying friends, and the health problems of old age. Producer Burt Lancaster selected Borgnine after working with him in *From Here to Eternity*. Intertextuality and interweaving personal relationships are continuously at play in this postwar period signaling a new and more interactive film scene.

Marty had also represented an important moment in 1950s American television, as one of Chiayefsky's best teleplays and as a sensitive representation of an Italian American family (fig. 6.3). Early American television actually proposed several productions with Italian storylines, from war brides to boxing, directed by directors such as Sidney Lumet, Delbert Mann, and Martin Ritt. These teleplays recall neorealism from the stylistic point of view, focusing on everyday life and using a naturalistic acting style, often entrusted to actors coming from the Actors Studio like the protagonist of the televised version of *Marty*, Rod Steiger.[72] The 1950s saw a vein of "American neorealism" in family melodramas about Italian families in film, on television, or in social films and documentary-like *film gris*, shot on location and in naturalistic performances.

Marty was shot in black and white, not only because it was cheaper and evoked its television origins, but also to bring out the drab environment surrounding the butcher. It was shot on location in the Bronx to give authenticity to the setting, for example, Marty and Clara's "romantic" walk under the harsh electric glare of the lights of the shops and the elevated train, but within an open space so as to express the beginnings of emotional freedom.[73]

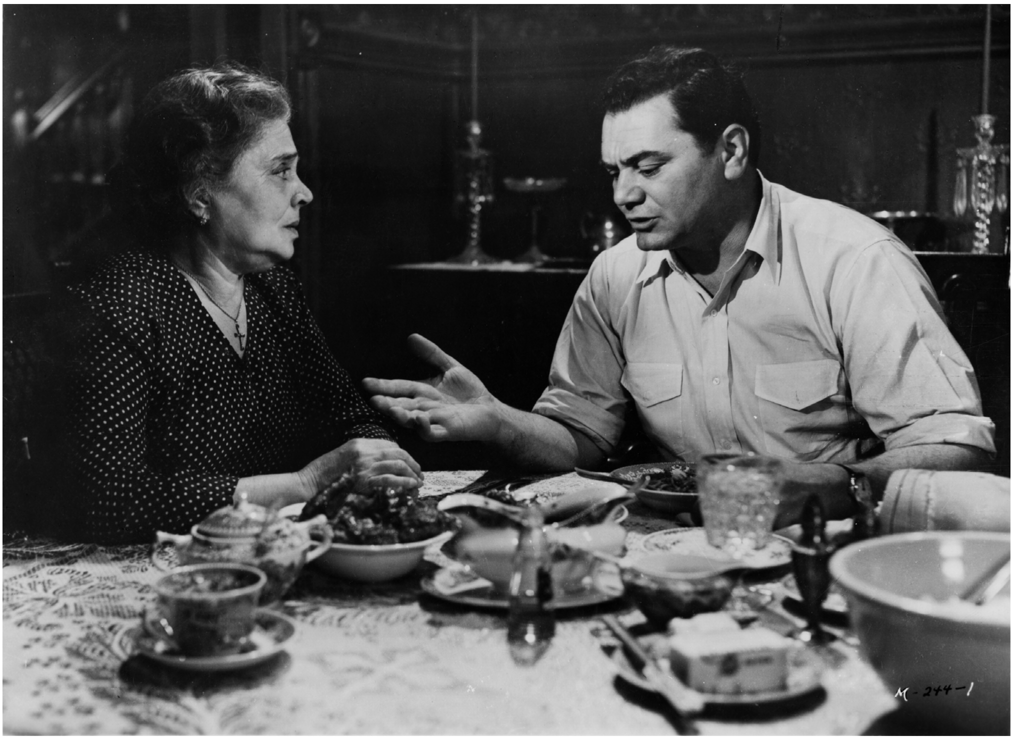


Figure 6.3. Esther Minciotti and Ernest Borgnine in the Oscar-winning *Marty* (1955). (Courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.)

Marty won the Oscar for best picture, best director, best actor, and best screenplay; in the same year, Magnani won her Oscar for *The Rose Tattoo*; the hybridization of Italian and American film talent was paying off indeed.

Esther Minciotti played another Italian mother in the aforementioned *Full of Life* with Judy Holliday and Richard Conte, in a story and script by John Fante. The film also cast her husband, Silvio Minciotti, as uncle Joe, and Italian American Joe De Santis from the immigrant stage as Father Gondolfo.[74]

In the film, very similar to Fante's Arturo Bandini saga in terms of characterization, Emily (Holliday), a young pregnant wife obsessed with hygiene, gradually comes to accept the family of her husband Nick (Conte), an Italian American writer.

Although the PCA had focused its bigoted attention on the film's representation of pregnancy, *Full of Life* actually draws a fine distinction between religion, Catholicism, and the Church with surprising honesty for its time. But it did maintain some controversial Italian characterizations too, for instance, when Mama (Esther Minciotti) makes Emily put on a garlic necklace to guarantee that her baby would be a boy. The film treats older generation Italians with a touch of irony but, in the end, shows them to be in the right, in the peculiar *grottesco* of Fante's writings.

Critics at the time praised the film for its warm realism and performances: "The Italian-Americans in the picture are played by people who know to the smallest gesture how these people act and react," wrote the *Harrison Report* (June 22, 1956), noting also: "One of the nicer things about this picture is that it states its facts frankly and without subterfuge. Catholics are Catholics, pregnant women are pregnant; these are the facts of life that deserve to be dealt with in motion pictures. *Full of Life* actually is a realistic picture." Again, realism is almost automatically associated with Italianness or Italian Americanness.

Family values are central in the film, but the true novelty is the sense of authenticity it communicates, written as it was by an Italian writer, acted by several Italian immigrant performers, and taking up themes that American cinema carefully avoided. As one reviewer observed:

> Audiences are in for quite a surprise and a refreshing one, at the frankness with which the subject of pregnancy is treated in the new Judy Holliday-Richard Conte comedy. . . . Warmth and humor and good taste have gone into the telling of the story, which depicts the wife's whims and erratic appetite, the husband's efforts to cater to the little woman at the same time that he's trying to keep up with his work, and the complications that arise when the household is taken over by a domineering father-in-law.[75]

Surprisingly enough, there was no mention of Mama's fainting spells and superstition in the reviews, either because Minciotti had made her character credible or because this picturesque characterization was so implanted in the American mentality as to be considered "authentic."

The domestic comedy-dramas of the postwar period, focusing on the Italian family, emphasize both the conflicts and the rich human values and authentic intimacy associated with the Italian family while starting to move beyond conventional stereotypes. Indeed, in *Intimacy and Italian Migration*, Baldassar and Gabaccia reevaluate the diasporic private sphere, stressing the important transnational dimension of intimacy, affectivity, and sexuality ruling and ruled by the relationship between migrants and nation. Most of all, they argue that this intimate dimension is as important as the public sphere in bringing about the inclusion of migrants and their descendants in diverse nations. The history of the representation of the Italian immigrant family in American cinema does confirm how aligned the image of the family and social inclusion were throughout the past century.

Fante's filmography is short but important, because he often wrote about Italian Americans. Whereas previous "Italian" filmmakers in Hollywood—such as Robert Vignola, Frank Capra, Gregory LaCava, and Frank Borzage—had no particular impact on the representation of Italians in American cinema, even when their films maintained the sensibility and the point of view of the immigrant, the work of a writer like Fante moved things along in a contradictory love-hate representation that echoes through the revival of his writing today, in Italy too.

Fante's *Brotherhood of the Grape* was one of Francis Coppola's pet projects, and Coppola himself was executive producer of *Wait Until Spring*, *Bandini* (1989). Indeed, contemporary Italian American filmmakers send out continuous signals of their knowledge and appreciation of their cultural roots.

Another immigrant performer who appeared in 1950s American films (but did not only play Italian Americans) was Sandro Giglio, who had been on the immigrant stage and film scene since the 1930s. In 1951, he made *Saturday's Hero*, a bitter critique of ethnic prejudices, as Polish Jan Novak, father of a football player. The casting of an Italian American, Giglio, in the role of Polish Novak confirms that ethnic flexibility continued as before in Hollywood, but new (ideological) problems were emerging. The PCA considered *Saturday's Hero* subversive because the dialogue defined the United States as a "country that makes it a humiliation to be Polish or poor or Italian or Jewish—to have a father who speaks with an accent, a mother who came from the old country."[76] In the immediate postwar period, racial and ethnic problems insistently surfaced in American pictures, but they were swept under the carpet of the conformist 1950s by the McCarthyist witch hunt.

Film critic Bosley Crowther often had good words for Giglio's performances, and especially appreciated him in *The Rose Tattoo:* "Sandro Giglio as a gentle priest leads a group of supporting players that give this picture . . . a sense of utter authenticity."[77] Since Crowther was the champion of neorealism in New York, his positive comments about the performances of these Italian actors from the immigrant stage confirm the expectation of a natural "neorealism" in their work. In Giglio's case, however, the very fact that he owned a theater that screened Italian (and neorealist) films adds a dimension that should not be forgotten: exposure to neorealist acting, related to the viewing of Italian cinema, which became far more frequent in the postwar period when compared with the past.

In the final part of his career, Giglio traveled to Italy too, to make *For the First Time*, an Italian-German coproduction with Mario Lanza. It was shot in Capri, the island off Naples where his father, Clemente, was born.

Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, and the Rat Pack

"In Napoli where love is king/When boy meets girl here's what they say/When a moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie/That's amore!" sings Dean Martin, in a funny duo with Jerry Lewis, in *The Caddy* (Norman Taurog, 1953). He dedicates the song to his fictional mother (Argentina Brunetti), while Frank Puglia plays the guitar and Joseph Calleia the accordion, with a large family group sitting around a table with flasks of wine on the inevitable checkered tablecloth. In the sequence, available in internet, whenever the song mentions an Italian dish, it is actually served. The family shares food, dances, and even sings along ("*Tutti quanti cantare*" exhorts Martin in an improbable Italian). The lyrics mix "old Napoli," *amore*, and *mamma*, with prosaic metaphors of food ("When the stars make you drool just like a pasta fazool"), and a catchy melody, performed by Martin with more than a touch of his usual irony.

Born in Ohio of an Abruzzo family, Dino Crocetti—boxer, speakeasy croupier, nightclub singer and actor—called himself Dean Martin and since 1946 played with (Jewish) Jerry Lewis in a very successful comic-musical duo (until 1956, when they split acrimoniously). *The Caddy* was their tenth film together and the second in which Martin played an Italian character (fig. 6.4).[78]

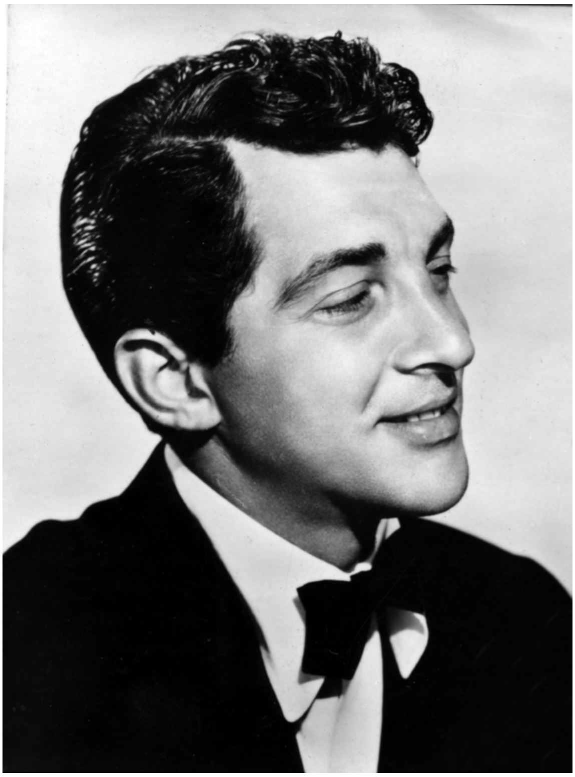


Figure 6.4. Dean Martin's seductive smile.

The scene is the quintessential stereotype of *Italianità*, emphasizing food, family, and music, but the redundancy of showing a pizza slice when pizza is mentioned draws attention to the issue of language, and therefore of identity. Italian words like *Napoli*, *amore*, *vita bella* (beautiful or good life), and *tarantella*, mix with mispronounced *pasta fasui* (bean soup) and *Signore*, *scuzza me*; but one does not need to know Italian to understand them, because the popularity of the Neapolitan lingo makes them cosmopolitan. The musical number is pleasantly cheerful, although Italian viewers may have found it too stereotypical and linguistically imprecise. And yet most of these performers are Italian, and the song was composed by one of the most popular songwriters in Hollywood, Harry Warren, born Salvatore Guaragna, also Italian. But in this instance, the association of Italian performers and an Italian composer with Italian characters does not produce a sense of authenticity. *That's Amore* documents instead the moment in which Italian Americanness, branded as the very representation of the harmonious ethnic family, has become so stereotypical as to be ironic, in particular in Martin's performance—his velvety voice and seductive smile directed to his mother, while Jerry Lewis echoes him in *falsetto*. The scene actually blends the duplicitous nature of the Dean Martin/Jerry Lewis multiethnic duo in a way that allowed 1950s audiences to laugh about ethnic stereotyping and proposed Martin's irony as a new detached way to exhibit identity. Italian entertainers had come a long way indeed, and from this moment on, they not only performed in small theaters to limited audiences but also became a mass media success.

The most successful Italian American performer of the 1950s and 1960s was (again) Frank Sinatra. After 1953, the year he won his Oscar, he took greater control over his singing, rejuvenating his style also thanks to the effective musical arrangements by Nelson Riddle, a student of influential exiled Italian composer Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco.[79]

In the mid-1950s, Sinatra's film career started up again and he made several films tackling controversial subjects. Given the impact of his star power, his combative attitude—against censorship and commercial, professional, or political restrictions—helped him regain the spotlight in the American media scene. He left his mark on the content and mode of production of American cinema, as in the case of *The Man with the Golden Arm* (Otto Preminger, 1955). Supported by an Oscar nomination for his performance of a drug-addict who goes cold turkey, and since it was obvious that such a film could never receive the PCA seal of approval, in agreement with distributor United Artists and director Preminger, he had the film distributed without the PCA seal of approval in commercial theaters, thus opening the way to discarding the self-censorship system.

He continued to be involved in Democratic politics too and joined the Rat Pack, a combination of performers grouped around Humphrey Bogart (who had led the Committee for the First Amendment in Washington, supporting the Hollywood Ten against HUAC). Together with the other Rat Pack members, he campaigned for Adlai Stevenson in his losing bids for the presidency, running against Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956.[80]

In 1955, actor Peter Lawford introduced him to his brother-in-law Senator John F. Kennedy; as Brownstein writes, "in the long history of Hollywood's relationship with politics, this was the pivotal moment."[81] Sinatra endorsed Kennedy's political aspirations, campaigning and raising funds for him, and supporting the Democratic Party in a variety of ways.[82] He "turned up regularly at the strategy sessions Kennedy and his men convened for political leaders at Lawford's oceanfront house as the 1956 campaign approached."[83]

He was quite busy with his film career too, but when he announced that he wanted to circumvent the blacklist by hiring Albert Maltz to write his production of (the already controversial) *The Execution of Private Slovik*, John Kennedy personally asked him to desist if he wanted to be part of his electoral campaign.[84]

After Bogart's death in January 1957, Sinatra took over the leadership of the Rat Pack (fig. 6.5). The Clan (as they preferred to be called) included Sinatra, Dean Martin, Peter Lawford, Sammy Davis Jr., and Joey Bishop—a multiethnic and multiracial group, proud and protective of these characteristics, but also devoted to drinking, women, and nasty jokes: "no longer victims of prejudice, they used humor to lash out at prejudice."[85]

If Sinatra was at the center of the Rat Pack, Martin was the essential component to complement and contrast with him. While Martin was ironic, "the king of Cool," Sinatra was passionate, and this difference emerged in both their singing and acting. Martin had an apparent easiness, as if it all came natural to him; Sinatra, in contrast, always had an intensity that communicated the effort but also the skills he had had to acquire in training his voice, to dance with Gene Kelly, or to act with Montgomery Clift—or to improvise jokes with the Rat Pack. In fact, in their live shows, Sinatra was not as good as Martin at improvising. Sinatra always showed hints of his personality in his performance, whereas Martin always held back, giving the impression that things were not as simple as they appeared, but

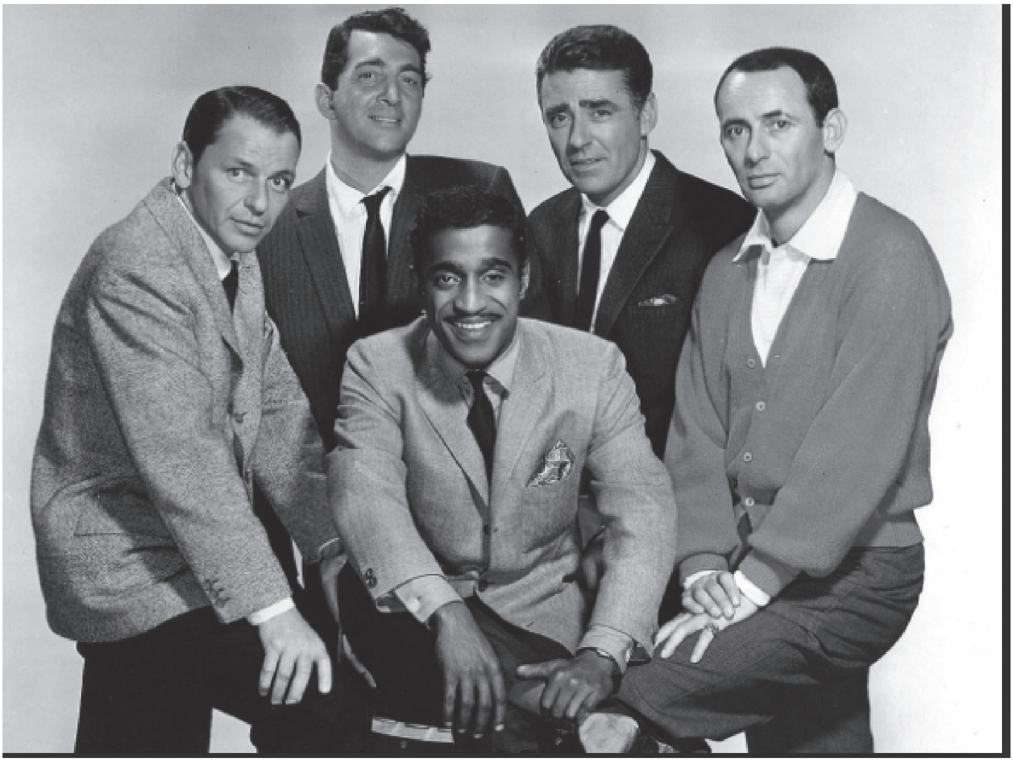


Figure 6.5. The anti-segregationist Rat Pak: Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Peter Lawford, Joey Bishop, and Sammy Davis Jr.

that he would not complain. They were friends, and both had beautiful young women at their feet and interesting film careers, which led them to work together at times.

But the turning point for Sinatra and his Rat Pack friends was his production of *Ocean's Eleven* (1960) in which he played Danny Ocean, leading a group of World War II veterans planning to rob Las Vegas casinos. It was a big commercial success and an ongoing party for the Rat Pack. At that time they were also performing at the Sands Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas—sleepless nights, gambling, girls, cigarettes, and Jack Daniels, "living out the fantasies of all middle-aged men who felt trapped in marriage, suburbia, and playing by the rules, . . . ushering in a new era of screen cool."[86] Quite different in tone from Steven Soderbergh's remake, more action than irony, with a downbeat ending, *Ocean's Eleven* "changed, indeed solidified, the public's perception of him as an all-encompassing package of entertainer, swinger, political power player, and movie star" with the added value of a "post-modern self-reflexive irony."[87]

John Kennedy too visited Sinatra and the Rat Pack at the Sands, and they would womanize and enjoy parties together, but Sinatra's big mistake in life was to introduce Kennedy to the same woman mobster and friend Sam Giancana was dating. In effect, the singer-actor had been very active in Kennedy's campaign. "In the struggle for the presidential nomination, daughter Nancy reports that her father secured the support of boss Sam Giancana in the crucial West Virginia primary."[88] Although, as Nelson and Pugliese point out, "Kennedy's aides fretted about their candidate's relationship with Sinatra [they] recommended that he be deployed to help a voter registration drive in Harlem, 'where he is recognized as a hero of the cause of the Negro.'"[89] His commitment to racial equality was publicly recognized: Sinatra was useful to Kennedy's campaign, not only because of his so often cited mafia relations, but for his attitude toward race, which was not a minor issue in Kennedy's politics. Indeed, the Rat Pack included performers of different ethnicities, races, and religious beliefs, most of all Sammy Davis Jr., a black Jewish performer and civil rights activist. In the late 1950s, black performers could play and act in the casinos, but they could not eat or sleep there. Sinatra and friends changed this situation and insisted that Davis stay with them, otherwise they would not perform. In those very years, when Davis married Swedish blonde actress May Britt, as a mixed couple they could not enter thirty-one states.[90] This attitude was not limited to supporting his friend Davis: on one occasion at the Sands, Sinatra invited Nat King Cole into the dining room. Together with the Rat Pack and Reprise label colleagues, he boycotted hotels and casinos that refused entry to black patrons and performers, thus playing a major role in the desegregation of Nevada. On January 27, 1961, Sinatra also performed at a benefit show for Martin Luther King Jr. at Carnegie Hall.

His main political involvement, however, was with JFK. In January 1961, together with Lawford, he organized the Inaugural Gala in Washington, DC. "He marshaled a small army of Hollywood stars to entertain at a convention-eve fund-raising gala for the Democratic Party. Nearly three thousand people paid $100 per plate to attend the July 10 event in LA."[91] The *New York Times* reported that the gala "may have been the most stunning assembly of theatrical talent ever brought together for a single show." Not incidentally, it raised $1.4 million for the Democratic Party. But JFK did not see Sinatra again until September, at his family's compound in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts.[92]

The crisis between Sinatra and the Kennedys came about because of his contacts with the Cosa Nostra.[93] Mobsters were indeed an integral part of the world of entertainment because of their control of the performance spaces (from the speakeasy during Prohibition to the casinos in the 1960s), and because they provided access to drugs and prostitution, thus being in a position to blackmail (or cover) stars and executives. With his mafia contacts, Sinatra was an immediate target for FBI investigation.

Attorney General Robert Kennedy "came to see the president's friendship with Sinatra as an unacceptable risk" when Edgar Hoover visited the president in March 1962 to tell him he knew about the relationship between Miss Campbell and JFK and Giancana. He urged his brother to break ties not only with the lady but also with Sinatra.[94]

In 1962, during a visit to Palm Springs, John Kennedy snubbed the Italian American performer's invitation, preferring to stay with Republican (and Sinatra's professional rival) Bing Crosby, driving a hard point home. As Brownstein noted, "by standing next to Kennedy, Sinatra may have hoped to surmount his past, but he was only stamped with it more indelibly than ever."[95] While Kennedy's defensive reaction in this instance is quite understandable from a political point of view, it must be noted that, "the 1960 presidential primaries represented the most noteworthy and fully sustained of all stories regarding Sinatra and organized crime."[96] This event has been interpreted as the cause of Sinatra's later shift to the Republican Party. Actually, as Pugliese notes, "a more sociological and historical (and less personal) explanation may lie in the general political odyssey of Italian Americans from urban, blue-collar democrats when they weren't 'white,' to suburban, white-collar (and white) conservatives."[97] In fact, Sinatra continued supporting Democratic candidates, in particular Hubert H. Humphrey, into the early 1970s.

In the 1960s, his film career continued with him playing older, bitter loners and at times producing his own films. He also directed *None But the Brave* (1965), the first American-Japanese coproduction with a pacifist message. Thus, he continued trying to "subvert" the Hollywood system, tackling controversial subjects and playing uncomfortable roles, often the loser, defending his sense of self. The whole of Sinatra's film career demonstrates that he did deserve an Oscar. Named "one-take Charlie" because he did not like to rehearse scenes, seeking spontaneity rather than psychological interpretations à la Actors Studio, he appears, today, to be more modern than the method actors with their excessive mannerisms.

Sinatra changed political allegiance in July 1972 when he publicly supported Richard Nixon for reelection. In the 1980s, he donated four million dollars to Reagan's campaign and arranged his presidential gala, as he had done for Kennedy twenty years before. A rumor spread that Reagan was going to appoint Sinatra ambassador to Italy. The Italian newspaper *La Stampa* was worried enough to huff: "If the American government thinks of Italy as the land of mandolins and La Cosa Nostra, then Sinatra would be the appropriate choice."[98] This disparaging comment confirms the little knowledge Italian media had of Sinatra in general (as of all things Italian American) as well as of his politics in particular.

When Sinatra became a Republican, he moved along the same political trajectory as the Italian American voters, the now "whitened" Italian American community. But contrary to the racist attitudes that at times characterized this community, he never stopped supporting ethnoracial tolerance. President Hubert H. Humphrey wrote to Sinatra's daughter, Nancy, "I am convinced that this early dedication and activity personified by your father helped create the political climate that made possible the passage of the civil rights legislation in the 1960s."[99] Sinatra's attitude to racial issues is often underplayed in favor of his oscillation in party politics, but his defense of racial equality was consistent as well as quite advanced for its time.

Music, White and Black

The "long farewell to *bel canto*," as Connolly and D'Acierno defined this period, was a time in which Italian American singers exerted "a certain hegemony over American popular singing."[100] In the 1950s and 1960s, renowned second- and third-generation Italian American singers, often of southern Italian origins, also expanded from the traditional musical domains of pop songs or jazz into other media, from television shows to films of all genres, tenor Mario Lanza (Alfredo Cocozza) with his film career; Perry Como with his popular weekly television program (from 1949 to 1963); Tony Bennett (Anthony Benedetto) with his jazz and pop duets; Frankie Laine (Francesco LoVecchio) and his western soundtracks;

Al Martino (Jasper Cini), the Johnny Fontane of *The Godfather*; Frankie Avalon (Francis Avallone) with the beach party movies with Annette Funicello; Jerry Vale (Gennaro Vitaliano) with "The Star-Spangled Banner" played at sports events (he appears as himself in Scorsese's *Goodfellas* and *Casino*); and Bobby Darin (Robert Cassotto) who won a Golden Globe for his performance in the romantic comedy *Come September* (Robert Mulligan, 1961), and appeared in Cassavetes's *Too Late Blues* (1961). (Darin also participated in Robert Kennedy's presidential campaign and was at the Ambassador hotel when he was killed.)

As John Gennari remarks, "From the 1940s to the 1960s, while many second-generation Italian Americans realized their American dream in the security of owing automobiles and homes, Italian popular singers (Sinatra, Perry Como, Dean Martin, Tony Bennett, Mario Lanza, Vic Damone, Jerry Vale, Jony James, Connie Francis, Bobby Darin) virtually defined the way America dreamed about love and romance."[101]

This musical world has also always been a locus of fruitful interaction between Italian American and black musicians. "The influence of turn-of-the-century Italian immigrant musicians, opera singers, and musical instrument makers on black artists" as Cinotto writes, "still needs to be ascertained, but *canzone napoletana*, a form of song extremely popular both in Italy and in American Little Italies, was clearly a cross-racial invention rooted in transatlantic commercialism." Sicilian New Orleans jazz musicians, such as Nick La Rocca and Louis Prima, and young contemporary hip hop artists in Italy would therefore come to share "a conscious musical project aimed at 'unmasking the hidden negritude of the *Mezzogiorno* (*Southern Italy*).'"[102]

In the 1960s, the cultural interaction between Italian and African American artists manifested itself in Italian American doo-wop, with Dion and the Belmonts, Vito and the Salutations, Felix Cavaliere and the Rascals, and Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, immortalized in the effective *Jersey Boys*, Clint Eastwood's personal rendition of the musical. As Cinotto observes: "A quintessentially urban and working-class form of expression, [Italian (and African American) doo-wop] traced its roots in gospel, urban blues, and the barbershop a cappella singing of the 1930s and 1940s. It typically consisted of a vocal quartet . . . with the support of little or no instrumentation, the sound of instruments mimicked by nonsense syllables (hence the name 'doo-wop')."[103] In relation to the sociocultural context, "it was situated at a dramatic turning point in Italian American history, at the onset of the civil rights era and at the peak of the unprecedented migration of people of color from the American South and Puerto Rico into New York City that decisively framed the Italian American descent into whiteness."[104] Thus doo-wop manifested its own racial and ethnic components in the years when the issue of race was crucial, for different reasons, to both the Italian and the African American communities. But its peculiar use of a high-pitch, quite feminine voice also suggested a more complex representation of gender roles within two macho cultures. In its Italian version, doo-wop "added the sense of the possibility of rewriting Italian American identity to acknowledge the 'blackness' in it—be it articulated in the love for the body and its artistic expression, sensual primitivism, or lyrical emotionality—at an enormously important political turning point in American history."[105] Discussing the revolutionary potential of popular music, in *Dan-*

gerous Crossroads, George Lipsitz noted in fact that it was “a site for experimentation with cultural and social roles not yet possible in politics.”[106]

Doo-wop represented a working-class taste, but third-generation Italian Americans also appreciated other types of music, as David Chase narrated in the very personal film *Not Fade Away* (2012). And yet music has always been at the core of Italian American culture, as a shared inter-generational taste, rooted in the community. In fact, “while working-class Italian parents generally discouraged artistic pursuits and studies in liberal arts, they (like black parents) incited their children (particularly, but not only, their sons) to use their bodies and voices in order to achieve fame in the world of entertainment.”[107]

By singing a cappella on street corners or in subway stations, Italian doo-woppers, like the street gangs to which they were often connected, marked their territory, but also exhibited their attachment to the neighborhood, in this way overcoming generational differences, while creating a sound barrier against unwanted intrusions.

The 1950s and 1960s also saw the success of a special Italian American format—which descended directly from Farfariello’s colonial *macchiette* and, even before that, from comic opera—in the work of the New Orleans–born singer and trumpeter Louis Prima, famous for “Just a Gigolo,” “Buona Sera,” “Sing, Sing, Sing,” and an inductee into the Jazz Hall of Fame. He went from the jazz of the New Orleans joints, where blacks and Italians played together, to swing and big bands, and, later on, to Hollywood movies.[108] In the same tradition of linguistic pastiche, Lou Monte (Louis Scaglione)—with the hits “Pepino the Italian Mouse,” sung in Calabrese and English, and “Lazy Mary (Luna Mezzo Mare),” full of double-entendres—performed even at the New York Mets games. Dean Martin ventured into this field too, singing playful versions of Neapolitan standards. Long before *The Sopranos*, there were already some Neapolitan and southern Italian terms whose meaning Americans had figured out.

The fame of the multiracial Rat Pack and the experiences of Prima and doo-wop emphasize that, as Cinotto puts it, “black/Italian musical crossovers are especially important to read in the light of the history of conflict between Italians and people of color that has otherwise been the dominant tale of the Italian racial experience in the United States.”[109]

These musical experiences therefore opened the way to “black/Italian crossover fantasies” at the roots of gangsta-rap, as documented by the T-shirts often worn by black DJs. Bonz Malone argues that Sinatra was “the dopest, phattest, most uncompromising voice of hip-hop masculinity.” The icon of black male cool, Marvin Gaye once said: “My dream was to become Frank Sinatra. I loved his phrasing. . . . He grew into a fabulous jazz singer and I used to fantasize about having a lifestyle like his. . . . My greatest dream was to satisfy as many women as Sinatra.”[110] This perhaps unexpected heritage of Sinatra the performer as a model of masculinity within the African American community indicates the need to move beyond *Do the Right Thing* and other texts documenting the racist attitudes of Italian Americans to discover common grounds and interchanges evident in the world of music from the origins of jazz. However, this in no way implies a negation of racist behavior on the part of Italian Americans, such as the episode in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn’s Little Italy, where some Italian Americans shot a young Afro-American in August 1989.[111]

Normally, blackness and whiteness are defined by contrast, but these experiences reveal that the cultural relations between Italian Americans and African Americans are far more articulated than any Manichean color line would lead us to expect. Interestingly enough, this cultural hybridization emerges in contemporary Neapolitan music too—with black Neapolitan saxophone player James Senese, with Enzo Avitabile, whom Jonathan Demme honored with a documentary, or with the world musicians performing in Turturro's *Passione*. The relations and the exchanges between Italian and American music and media have intensified and increasingly come about through the mediation of Italian Americans, legitimate heirs to this culture: "birds of passage" never stop flying.

Toward the Contemporary Scene

In the early 1970s, two important films signaled both the resurrection of American cinema and a reformulation of the Italian American image: Francis Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972) and Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973). And without falling into nationalist chauvinism, *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969), the film that inaugurated the so-called Hollywood renaissance, had Italian roots since it was, admittedly, inspired by a bitter Italian comedy, Dino Risi's *Il sorpasso*.[112] The influence of Italian cinema on Hollywood, the increasing number of Italian Americans with significant roles in American media, and unexpected transatlantic media exchanges follow ways that might seem mysterious unless one considers the mobility of cultural hegemony and its complex relationship with the historical context.

In fact, Italian Americans of the third generation seem to find in cinema the "symbolic ethnic identity" they needed at a time of change.[113] In the 1960s, the civil rights struggles created the expectation that a clear color line had been drawn where white ethnics of European origins had found a stable positioning, thanks to American "structural mobility" that allowed them to move up in the social scale. It was the time of an "ethnic revival" because having disarmed the category of race, ethnicity seemed a comfortable enough concept to identify and analyze cultural differences (rather than commonalities). Furthermore, according to historian Richard Alba, immigration from Italy had increased since 1965, "when the immigration laws were revised to eliminate biased national-origin quotas. Since that time, about twenty thousand Italian immigrants have entered the United States annually."[114] This continuous flow of Italians is not only a presence able to refresh and update ethnic culture but also to diversify it, because it does not reach the United States prevalently from the south and from the lower social strata, as before.

In the 1960s and 1970s, third-generation Italian Americans gained higher social status, and according to data from the 2000 federal census, "the accomplishments of Italian Americans in education, employment, and income are even higher than the national average."[115] This new social scene allowed the community to acquire ample visibility and to associate with the renewed success of contemporary Italian culture: cinema, design, fashion, and food, and to value the continuity of the traditions it had maintained, most of all in *spettacolo*.

Indeed, the Italian immigrant contribution to the American entertainment media resembles a subterranean river and in the 1970s it surfaced and flooded the screens. Italian American performers moved from the wings to the proscenium and took over the stage, while Italian American directors made a name for themselves shooting independent, blockbuster, and Oscar-winning movies.[116] At times, their cinema reflected on their ethnic culture, taking advantage of their artistic status or commercial success to represent Italian Americanness in their own terms, although these terms never totally escaped the shackles of the stereotype developed within the American media landscape.

From the 1970s onward, members of the artistic community continued to gain recognition reflecting both the consolidated traditions of excellence and an ongoing transformation of the American sociocultural scene, the "twilight of ethnicity,"[117] which appeared to witness the emergence of Italian Americanness as increasingly "fashionable."

Professional opportunities for this generation of Italian and American performers, at the same time, grew exponentially. They represent the connection between a past Italian American culture, which proudly preserved traits of its diversity, and the welcoming media scene of today. Francis Coppola's and Martin Scorsese's innovative approaches to filmmaking—in their production methods, use of technologies, and rethinking of stylistic conventions, narrative structures, and use of sound and music—have received international critical attention. The literature on these directors (as well as on Quentin Tarantino, among many other Italian American filmmakers) is so extensive that it makes any discussion of their work unnecessary. However, it is important to recall the articulate cinephile attitudes of Coppola and Scorsese: from classical American film to the French Nouvelle Vague, passing through Luchino Visconti's melodramas and his elegant mise-en-scène of costume pictures. In their work aesthetic traits of Italian *spettacolo*, in its "artistic" and authorial approach, join the traditions of Neapolitan *sceneggiata*, with its roots in Italian melodrama, and macchietta, derived from *opera buffa*, and yet they remain within the mainstream of American cinema.

That *Mean Streets* and *The Godfather* marked the renaissance of American cinema is a given, but the "coincidence" that their directors are both Italian American is only apparent.[118] Cavallero and Ruberto's argue that "Italian Americans serve as a particularly compelling case study since their socioeconomic standing within the United States has varied so greatly."[119]

Italian American culture had, in itself, the potential for this impact on cinema, given that it had preserved its theatrical traditions and benefited from interactions with other ethnoracial performance cultures as well as with Italian cinema.

Already in their earliest films, Scorsese and Coppola presented an image of Italian Americanness that blended violence with values, religion, and family, that is, the metropolis and corporate capitalism with old traditions and a strong sense of self. *Mean Streets* and *The Godfather* gave emotional and cultural depth to previously one-dimensional figures of Italian mobsters and transformed American individualism into Italian charisma both in terms of performance style and character.

Nowadays, American filmmakers of Italian origins occupy many crucial creative positions (but less so on the managerial level). Their works provide a more comprehensive picture of the community. As already discussed, negative images have been projected on the Italians for decades, with a visual persistence that is hard to counteract, incised as it was on the world's retinas. This frozen image is so persistent because it was constructed outside of history, in the folklore of the picturesque and in response to deeply rooted ethnoracial prejudices. The social status of the community would permit the development of a different image today, but this operation requires a historicized reappropriation of the Italian American experience, a deep knowledge of its traits. In fact, a less defensive attitude toward identity implies an acknowledgment of its specificity, its roots in glorious stage traditions, which make it possible to separate the actor from the character, the style and emotional involvement from generic narrative structures. What makes Tony Soprano interesting to worldwide audiences is not that he is a Mafioso, but that he is a complex family man, working in a neocapitalist economic system, nurturing such uncontrollable but human emotions, and that he needs a psychoanalyst. As long as criticism is directed at the mere narrative functions, without taking into consideration the space of identification for the audience and the appealing, innovative forms of the narrative, everything will appear to remain the same. But evidently it is not so.

If the role of Italian American directors is important for the visibility and representation of the community, equally significant is the presence of an enormous crowd of Italian American performers: Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, John Turturro, John Travolta, Sylvester Stallone, Nicholas Cage, Danny DeVito, Ben Gazzarra, Danny Aiello, Vincent Gardenia, Annabella Sciorra, Stanley Tucci, Joe Mantegna, Ray Liotta, Joe Pesci, Susan Sarandon, James Gandolfini, Marisa Tomei, Talia Shire, Chazz Palminteri, Gary Sinise, Steve Buscemi, Paul and Mira Sorvino, Michael Imperioli, Vincent Gallo, Lorraine Bracco, Edie Falco, Mark Ruffalo, Bobby Cannavale, and the list goes on.

Since continuity is a central argument in this book, the work of these actors not only often bears more than a trace of the traditional characteristics of the "Italian actor," but it signals how the Italian American presence in American media is not as "new" as it may be perceived. Furthermore several of these performers are Italian by virtue of their family name and because they appreciate or inherited the Italian performance traditions that animated American cinema and television throughout the last century. In the case of theatrical families such as the Barbatos, the Gardenias, the Cecchini-Aguglias, and the Pennino-Coppolas, this amazing continuity is both genealogical and cultural.[120] Olga Barbato, for instance, performed in the 1930s and 1940s on the immigrant stage and on radio in New York with her popular mother, "Donna Vicenza," and in the 1980s, when American cinema discovered this Italian American cultural patrimony, she was cast as Angelina the medium in Woody Allen's *Broadway Danny Rose* (1984).

A similar case is that of San Francisco–born Mimi Cecchini Romeo. Her career covers the entire history of the Italian immigrant stage. The daughter of Italian theater actor Gustavo Cecchini and Teresa Aguglia, she had her first film role when she was 10 months old, performed at the Italian Theater in New York when she was four (prompting her family to move to Brooklyn). Later in her career, she would host her own Italian language radio program and, driven by professional awareness, she became president of the Italian Actors Union. Her film credits include *The Godfather*, *The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight*, *Slow Dancing in the Big City*, and *Moonstruck*.[121]

Another emblem of continuity is the career of Vincent Gardenia. Born in Naples, the son of a famous *impresario* of the immigrant stage, he worked as a child with his father's Brooklyn-based theater company. In the late 1950s, he played both policemen and wise guys in several popular television series, and Lipari in Lumet's *A View from the Bridge* (an adaptation of Arthur Miller's Italian American drama). In 1972, Gardenia won a Tony Award for *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*. In the 1970s and 1980s, he acted in more than one hundred films and television episodes, including dark comedies such as *Where's Poppa?* (Carl Reiner, 1970) and *Little Murders* (Alan Arkin, 1971). He was in *Bang the Drum Slowly* (John Hancock, 1973) with De Niro and Danny Aiello, a film about the experience of Italian baseball players (for which he received an Oscar nomination). In the otherwise stereotypical *Moonstruck* (Norman Jewison, 1987*)*, he played Cosmo Castorini, an Italian American man confused by the changing roles of women within the family; his performance won him another Academy Award nomination. The American cinema of the 1970s was able to make use of his irascible manner and his broad expressive palette, needed for the New Hollywood's less Manichean characters. Gardenia also worked in Italy, in films of varying importance, from colonel Charles Poletti in Francesco Rosi's *Lucky Luciano* (1974) to B-movies. As a matter of fact, a "return" to Italy is a regular feature in the lives of several Italian American performers and filmmakers.

The Coppolas come from the theatrical family of Neapolitan composer Francesco Pennino, who gave the director his first camera as a present when he was bedridden with polio. August Coppola, his older brother and a professor of comparative literature, was the inspiration for the character of Motorcycle Boy in *Rumble Fish* (1983) and the stimulus for Coppola's *cinephilia* and literary passions. Their sister, Talia (Shire), frequented the Actors Studio and played Adriana in the *Rocky* series, Connie in *The Godfather*, and, among others, was the protagonist of *Old Boyfriends* (Joan Tewkesbury, 1979). Today the dynasty includes her sons, the Schwartzman brothers: Jason, an actor (*Marie Antoinette*, *Darjeeling Express*, *Budapest Hotel*, and the innovative *Mozart in the Jungle*, created with cousin Roman), and Rooney band musician Robert; they often collaborate with the other Coppolas or with Wes Anderson. Actor Nicholas Cage and independent filmmaker Christopher are the late August Coppola's sons. Francis Coppola appreciated working with the older generation (his father Carmine, musician and composer) and with the new one, namely, his daughter, Sofia, now a successful director, and his son Roman, a writer and producer. His granddaughter Gia is also now in the business as a director.

Coppola paid homage to his grandfather in *The Godfather II*, in the sequence devoted to Pennino's most famous work, *Senza mamma*, sung by Livio Giorgi, son-in-law of Neapolitan musician and actor Alfredo Bascetta and one of the many Italian Americans related to previous generations of immigrant performers cast in the three *Godfather* movies.

As already mentioned, since the postwar period, actors from the immigrant stage who could speak Italian have found work in Italian cinema or in films made in Italy too. The reverse is true as well. In the 1970s, Francis Coppola hired Italian cinematographer Vittorio Storaro to shoot his 1979 *Apocalypse Now* (for which Storaro won the Oscar for Best

Cinematography). Over time, the technical-creative exchanges between the Italian and American film industries have intensified, as manifested in the list of Academy Awards handed out for Best Art Direction and Best Costumes (Milena Canonero, Gabriella Pescucci, and Dante Ferretti), Best Cinematography (Dante Spinotti, Vittorio Storaro, Carlo Di Palma), Best Special Effects (Carlo Rambaldi), Best Editing (Pietro Scalia), and Best Original Soundtrack (Ennio Morricone, Giorgio Moroder).

Italian culture in the United States is sensitive to the shocks and tremors that can rattle the institution of the family and socioemotional relations; it also developed new cultural totems, such as food or fashion. Riding the wave of cultural change, Italian American filmmakers have reformulated film genres by combining, for example, film noir and melodrama, by adding an ironic dimension à la Rat Pack to gangster films, and by innovating musical genres (Coppola, Scorsese), war movies (Coppola, Cimino), action films (Tarantino, Scorsese, De Palma), horror films (Joe Dante), and comedy (Penny and Garry Marshall). As the show runner of *The Sopranos*, David Chase (De Cesare) has had an equally significant impact not only on the genre, but also on the overall structure of television dramas by transforming "episodes" into fully fledged films. Coppola, Scorsese, and Chase are key figures in the innovation of the mode of production, formats, themes, style, and media technologies, both inside and outside the American mainstream: Renaissance artists who follow their own roads even when working within a commercial system.

Often critics discussing American media do not distinguish between Hollywood and independent cinema or between network and cable television which, having different audiences, allow for a diverse approach to ethnic identity and storytelling. This is why here the focus is both on independent cinema and on mainstream Hollywood.

While not immediately perceived as an Italian American filmmaker, De Palma actually directed *Wise Guys*, *The Untouchables*, and *Snake Eyes* (with Nicolas Cage as corrupt policeman Rich Santoro); his *Scarface* adapts the Italian story narrated by Howard Hawks in 1931 to a Cuban Tony Montana. Thus, Hollywood ethnic flexibility is still at play, supported by a powerful persistence of vision even in casting. After *Mean Streets*, for example, Harvey Keitel, whose parents were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, often appears in Italian American settings, as does Cuban-born Andy Garcia after his appearance in *The Godfather*.

Michael Cimino offered an excessively romantic portrait of the mafia in *The Sicilian* (1987) but exploited "ethnic flexibility" in *The Deer Hunter* (1978), set in a Russian American community, by casting De Niro, and using the Four Seasons' "Can't Take My Eyes Off You," with great emotional intensity. The "twilight of ethnicity" made the discourse on ethnicity and race in these films both complex and multilayered.

The second wave of filmmakers includes Abel Ferrara, who constructed a personal representation of the Italian American in *The King of New York* (1990) and *The Funeral* (1996), as well as Quentin Tarantino. Tarantino, even though not "evidently" Italian American, through his casting choices, as in the case of De Palma, suggests otherwise: consider Buscemi in *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), the astute selection of Travolta for *Pulp Fiction* (1994), and De Niro's role in *Jackie Brown* (1997). In his more recent work, Tarantino has paid homage to Italian B-movie action films and the soundtrack of his movies often uses music composed by or inspired by the Italian film composers Ennio Morricone or Luis Bacalov.

A special Italian American case is that of actors turned directors, including Danny DeVito, Ann Bancroft, John Turturro, Steve Buscemi, Stanley Tucci, Vincent Gallo, Sylvester Stallone, Al Pacino, and Robert De Niro, whose *A Bronx Tale* (1993) was written by another Italian actor, Chazz Palminteri). The actor-turned-director combination has been a tradition in Italian theater, but acquires particular significance in this case, when these performers choose stories related to their Italian American roots for the films they direct and often produce independently: it is a claim to an identity that reflects back on their work as actors.

In his *Trees Lounge* (1996), Steve Buscemi offers a humorous and self-ironic portrayal of a dysfunctional Italian American family. His direction of some of *The Sopranos* episodes won him several awards. As in Turturro's films, or in Nancy Savoca's *True Love*, Buscemi's work maintains a delicate balance between identification and irony. This particular combination, apparently contradictory since irony is supposed to have a distancing effect, allows for lightness of touch even when these films deal with complex issues and is indeed characteristic of Italian American cinema.

In *Buffalo '66* (1998), on the other hand, Vincent Gallo's approach to a dysfunctional family is melancholic as well as disquieting. Ben Gazzarra, Angelica Huston, and Christina Ricci make up a cast that suggests an Italian American setting, but the mother is a baseball fanatic who has never looked after her son and does not cook for her family, in short, the opposite of the stereotype of the Italian "mamma." The film makes efficient use of the musical soundtrack, composed by the actor himself.

Turturro is the most representative of the group. All of his films have an Italian American setting: *Mac* (1992) is the story of a working-class family and a father-son relationship that emphasizes the importance of excelling in one's job, whatever it might be. The protagonist of *Illuminata* is a playwright, Tuccio, who works for an Italian theater repertory company in the early 1900s, allowing Turturro to explore the experience of the immigrant stage with historical competence and playful irony toward its narcissistic conflicts. *Romance and Cigarettes* is a rock opera, featuring James Gandolfini as the working-class husband and father, and Susan Sarandon as the not-so-subdued wife. This underrated film narrates an Italian American story with humor and notable maturity, moving far beyond ethnic stereotyping. *Fading Gigolo* (2013), with Woody Allen, adopts a self-ironic and grotesque "Dean Martin/Jerry Lewis mode," updated for the 2010s. Added to Turturro's association with the Coen brothers, this film again suggests the need to investigate the interactions between Jewish and Italian American stage artists in order to understand, for instance, the peculiar humor this combination allows to develop and its socio-ideological significance.

Most of these authors share stylistic traits that seem to characterize filmmakers of Italian American origins: naturalistic acting, attention to social settings, perhaps in unconventional terms, as well as particular care in the use of music. Scorsese directed innovative documentaries on musicians and bands and also made musicals, in addition to incorporating popular songs in his films in ways reminiscent of *sceneggiata*. The use of operatic music and rock in *Apocalypse Now* advances the narrative while also commenting on it. De Palma used Puccini's "Nessun dorma" in the finale of *Redacted* (2007), a film constituted by an experimental fusion of media approaches to the Iraq war: the aria becomes an emotional, desperate, scream, with its "Vincerò" (I will win) to further attack American military conduct in the Gulf War. Turturro directed *Passione* (2010), a film anthology of Neapolitan songs, and the working-class musical *Romance and Cigarettes*, and Vincent Gallo is a musician as well as an actor. Not to mention all the Italian American singer actors, and the specific case of Madonna's explorations into directing.

While some filmmakers so far have grabbed most of the critical and historical attention, the study of contemporary Italian American cinema would benefit from a transversal analysis, both stylistic and thematic, of these directors'works, viewing them as a group, as the collective soul of Italian American culture.

Indeed, films by Italian American filmmakers produced independently on the East Coast at times offer a more nuanced image of the community, addressing the economic and sociocultural complexity of the United States today, with particular attention given to gender roles and race but also to attitudes toward religion (*Household Saints*, directed by Nancy Savoca, 1993) or the obsession with food (*Big Night*, directed by Stanley Tucci and Campbell Scott, 1996) or, rarely, local relations with organized crime. In fact, the greater the distance from Hollywood, the less often the Mafia appears, not because of self-censorship (and not only because action films would be more expensive), but because another ideology of the community emerges: identification with and dedication to a "job well done," a deeply rooted value of Italian American culture.

These films privilege interior shots and offer actors of diverse generations the ideal space for dialogue and confrontation. There is also an interesting use of locations, as in *Brooklyn Lobster* (Kevin Jordan, 2005), the Bronx in *True Love* (Nancy Savoca, 1989), or Providence, Rhode Island in *Federal Hill* (Michael Corrente, 1994), instead of fancier images of the East Village and picturesque shots of Little Italy. Some of these titles are debut films in careers that do not necessarily continue along ethnic lines. Little known as they might be, Nancy Savoca, Tom DiCillo, Raymond De Felitta, Michael Corrente, and Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno, just to cite a few, deserve a closer look.

Made independently in New York (and winner of the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance), Nancy Savoca's *True Love* focuses on Donna (Annabella Sciorra), a young romantic Italian American girl in love with Michael, who seems more interested in going out with his friends than in the preparations for their marriage (fig. 6.6). This unusual debut (finally) presents interesting Italian female characters: a girl immersed in her culture to the point of choosing blue mashed potatoes to match the color of the bridesmaids' dresses, but nevertheless looking for authenticity in her relationship; and a mother as her daughter's "accomplice," in affectionate confrontations, which reminds one of Magnani and Pavan in the finale of *The Rose Tattoo*. After *True Love*, Savoca went on making films and made-for-television movies constructed around female characters that addressed issues of gender, homosexuality, race, class, and ethnicity with humor and empathy.

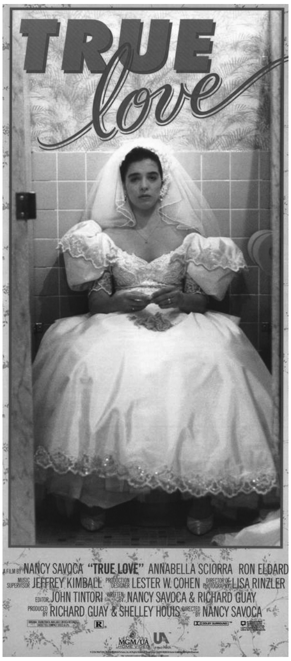

TRUE
love
A FILM BY NANCY SAVOCA "TRUE LOVE" ANNABELLA SCIORRA RON ELDARD
MUSIC SUPERVISOR JEFFREY KIMBALL PRODUCTION DESIGNER LESTER W. COHEN DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY LISA RINZLER
EDITOR JOHN TINTORI WRITTEN BY NANCY SAVOCA & RICHARD GUAY
PRODUCED BY RICHARD GUAY & SHELLEY HOUIS DIRECTED BY NANCY SAVOCA
R
DOLBY SURROUND
MGM/UA HOME VIDEO
UA

Figure 6.6. Annabella Sciorra as a perplexed newlywed in Nancy Savoca's *True Love* (1989).

Female figures in film, both in front of and behind the camera, are changing the way the Italian American family and gender roles are represented, as the filmographies of Italian American actresses demonstrate, allowing them to grow old and mature, as in the case of Susan Sarandon, Annabella Sciorra, and Marisa Tomei, moving from romantic leading ladies to more substantial roles as wives and mothers, or as working professionals. Oscar-winning actress Anne Bancroft (Anna Italiano) directed *Fatso* (1980), featuring Dom DeLuise, the story of an overweight Italian man, discussing the relationship food-family-feelings—a crucial theme indeed within the diasporic mentality.

In *Intimacy and Italian Migration*, Loretta Baldassar and Donna Gabaccia emphasize the transnational expression of affectivity and care for family members typical of the Italian diaspora. Migrants tried to "domesticate" a public world perceived as menacing and discriminatory through their special private sphere through "Italian" ideas about honor, sexuality, maternity, and the "spirit of sacrifice" in the interest of the family, through nostalgia for the mother country to which one can return physically or mentally, through the rich private rituals of things "*all'italiana*," and, most of all, through food. These were the foundations on which Italian migrants built a large part of their identity as Italians abroad. Given the centrality of the private sphere and issues of gender in Italian American culture, any study of the feminine and the masculine in American media products authored by Italian women filmmakers might reveal a far more comprehensive image of the contemporary family and its members. In addition to Savoca and Bancroft, this is the case with Marylou Tibaldo Bongiorno, who directed *Little Kings*, a small independent feature on gender relations within Italian American families. She also directed interesting documentaries, such as *Mother Tongue* (1999) in which she interviewed famous Italian men (including Giuliani, Turturro, Viscusi, and Scorsese) about their relationships with their mothers (as well as with Italian American culture). *Revolution '67* (2007) a meticulously reconstructed look at the Newark riots, presents both new information and a radical socioeconomic reading of the city's deadliest riot, also documented in the successive documentaries devoted to local socioracial experiences.

Documentary filmmaking is indeed a very stimulating section of Italian American independent cinema that presents new ways of investigating the history and ways of living of the diasporic community, todays' complex realities, the Italian American role in the sociopolitical scene, thus offering a more comprehensive and well-informed image of the community than is presented in the commercial media (at times even uncovering new historical material that is precious to scholars too).[122]

In 1995, the New Yorker Tom DiCillo, who has completed the *cinéma vérité*–inspired documentary *Down in Shadowland* (2014), shot over a five-year time span in the New York subway, wrote and directed the humorous *Living in Oblivion*, a remake of Fellini's *8½* of sorts in which the director (Buscemi) struggles with an overbearing mother and a seductive star, between meta communication, film culture, and self-irony.

Raymond De Felitta takes a new approach to music, race, and Italian American identity. In his *Two Family House* (2000), factory worker Buddy (Michael Rispoli) dreams of being the next Sinatra and buys a two-family house so as to turn the ground floor into a bar and performance space. But his Italian American wife has more down-to-earth projects and refuses to support him, which, in turn, causes him to join forces with an unwed Irish mother (of a black child). De Felitta continues making personal films, both documentary and fiction, and is working on a project on the Italian American singer Jimmy Roselli titled *Make the Wiseguys Weep*.

These independent films propose a less stereotypical image of Italian Americans than their Hollywood counterparts, representing both the community as it is today, and wider social and racial tensions in US society. Contemporary (independent) Italian American cinema seems to share a common, albeit nonexclusive project: an honest and authentic self-representation of Italian Americanness. Paradigmatic traits remain: focus on the family (often presented as dysfunctional), meaningful use of music, naturalist acting, and special attention to the emotional life of the individual.

In a media world of special effects and eternal adolescence, Italian American cinema maintains an authentic connection with feelings and emotions, once the Italian cultural "weak point," now transformed into a "maternal dispensation of food and soul," as Gennari puts it.[123] As with their contribution to the filmic renaissance of the 1970s, it might be their mature representation of characters—not mere psychology, but a complex bundle of values and sentiments, humorous or tragic as they might be—that could help save American cinema from coming to an inevitable artistic dead end (judging by the current crop of mainstream entertainment products).

In search of their roots, as "birds of passage," some of these filmmakers and performers have "returned" to Italy, both in cultural terms, by acknowledging their heritage, and in person by visiting Italy. John Turturro, who has shown his appreciation of the traditions of the immigrant stage on several occasions,[124] traveled to Italy to make movies first with Francesco Rosi and then with Nanni Moretti (fig. 6.7). He also performed in an English version of Eduardo De Filippo's great classic, *Questi fantasmi* (2008) on stage, both in New York and in Naples. In *Passione* (2010) a documentary about the traditions and contemporary performances of Neapolitan songs, Turturro paid homage to *la canzone napoletana* by embracing a world music approach. The fusion of Mediterranean and black sounds with traditional melodies allows the subversive potential of globalization processes to emerge as forms of cultural synergy. *La canzone napoletana* encourages this cultural operation because of its indigenous cosmopolitanism, given the city's long history of invasions, as emphasized by the rapper Raiz in the film.

Naples, once the point of departure, is now the place to return to. In Naples, the *porosità*, the subterranean voids in the terrain evoked by Walter Benjamin in his famous essay, swallow cultures and creative energies as well as evil matter—the garbage of "*la terra dei fuochi*," of the land of fires. But, like a volcano, at times, the land ejects these ebullient forces, recalling ancient terrors and old historical problems. The summit of Mt. Vesuvius crashed into the crater in 1944, the year of the Allied liberation and the beginning of the American military occupation of the city. The song "Tammuriata nera" (black drum beat)—composed by E. A. Mario in the same year—and its best-known interpreter, Peppe

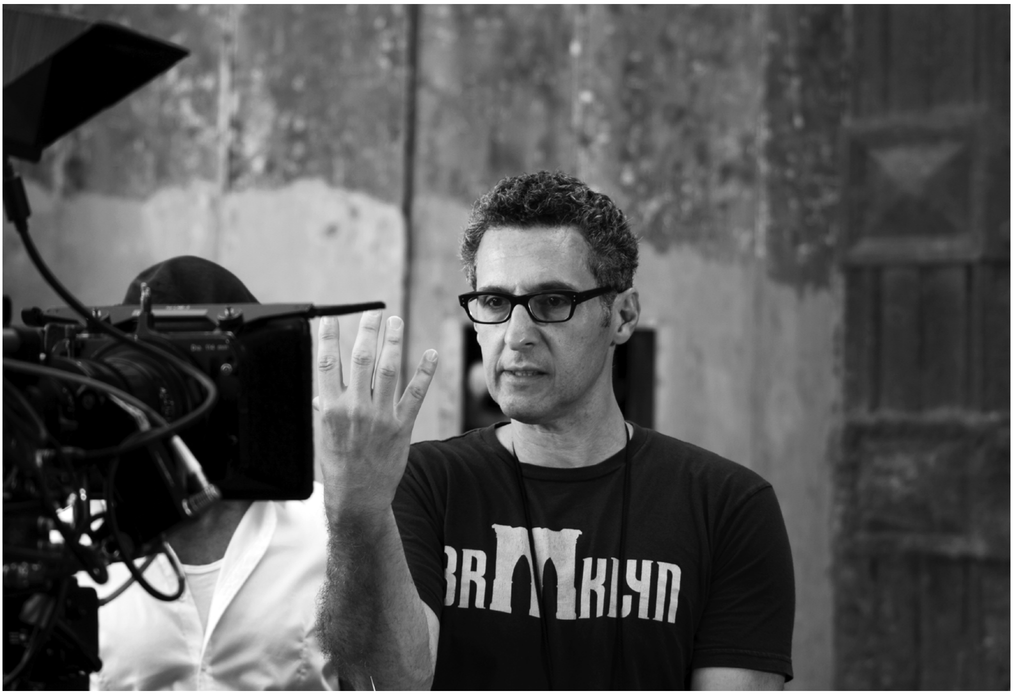


Figure 6.7. John Turturro on the set of *Passione* (2010), a compilation of Neapolitan songs interwoven with musical cultures from around the world, shot in Naples. (Courtesy of John Turturro.)

Barra in *Passione*, ironize about the birth of black children in the city, the illegitimate fruit of Neapolitan girls' lovemaking with black GIs. American influences in Neapolitan culture have left many traces in music too, but most of all in the arrangements and the rhythms of the modern *canzone napoletana*. Rediscovering the cosmopolitan values of this combination encourages greater attention to similar synergic phenomena, emerging in recent transatlantic film and television productions such as *Gomorra 2* and other international coproductions.

As in the past, Naples showcases this cultural mix, radical diversity and (consequent) marginality, yet it is able to engender a welcoming cosmopolitan, cross-class popularity. On this scene, ancient Neapolitans meet modern Americans with unexpected results, as the Sopranos soon discover when visiting the city.

From Napoli to New York and Hollywood and Back to Napoli

Italian and American *culture dello spettacolo* have always interacted in complex ways from the silent era to the predominance of Italian American filmmakers and performers in Hollywood today. This interaction has come about within a cycle of reciprocal influences and usages, although the contribution of Italian performers and Italian stage traditions within American media has not yet been acknowledged, in film history, while few would deny the role of Hollywood in creating a global socioethnic imaginary. The presence of Italian and Italian American performers in the American entertainment media started with the contradictory use of their work in pre–World War II cinema, oscillating between social prejudice and respect for the glorious traditions of the Italian stage, and resulting in the creation of a rigid stereotype of the Italian, equally divided between sentimentalism and violence.

Classical Hollywood cinema appreciated national and ethnic difference as a performative and dramaturgic resource, favored by the cosmopolitan cultural identities of ethnic performers but found in Italian performers the naturalism and the versatility required in a cinema devoted to narrative economy. Most of these performers were of southern Italian origins who brought with them cultural traditions from the rich *cultura dello spettacolo*. They lent their bodies, gestures, and lively physicality to the characters they played, often not Italian ones, in the dark times of the Italian diasporic community. And yet their performances, their last names in the credits, and the cultural stereotype of the Italian that emerged across the American entertainment media created a "picturesque" image of Italian Americanness that, at times, has penetrated even the self-representation offered by Italian Americans themselves—as if Southern Italy, or Naples, were representative of the whole of Italy. Italian Americans acquired the symbolic identity of the Southerners, with their *pregi e difetti* (strengths and weaknesses), taking with them, in their transatlantic travels, the racist prejudices that developed out of the process of Risorgimento, the unification of Italy, as far as the Southern Question is concerned. Often, migrants learnt what Italy was only after they had left it, but by the 1940s, their "roots" had become more a set of individual rituals connected to their family history, and the diasporic community had become both Italian and American. And although there were deep differences between the way a northern Italian and a southern Italian experienced immigration in the United States, in the end, these differences were not significant enough for them not to recognize themselves in Italian arts, music, culture, and cinema.

History changed at the end of World War II, when Italy became the United States' closest ally and when Italian Americans—with the advent of Italian neorealism which projected a new aesthetics that was radically different from but by no less influential than Hollywood—began to be recognized as white. At present, it could easily be argued that Italian American filmmakers and performers occupy a key position within the American entertainment media in the new globalized imaginary.

Even though inside the community, as well as outside, the widespread image of Italian Americans is still prevalently southern Italian, after World War II—after Fellini, Antonioni, Pasolini, and Bertolucci; after the successful spread of Italian fashion throughout American department stores and in fashion shows;[125] and after Italian food and wine began to outnumber French products and cuisine in elegant restaurants and "made in Italy" became a sign of distinction as it once was in the arts during the renaissance—pride and identity come from Italianness. More recently, American food stores have started offering not only southern mozzarella, but also northern Asiago cheese, and restaurant menus have replaced spaghetti and meatballs (unknown in Italy) with risotto, offering a northern Italian style of cuisine—now the cuisine of choice of the upper class and connoisseurs—rather than the traditional southern Italian cuisine. Awareness of the many Italies that make up the Beautiful Country is penetrating both American and Italian American culture.

Within the community, tradition is still associated with family roots and the unpronounceable names of small villages, but fourth-generation Italians return to an Italy comprising Milan, Rome, and Florence, and perhaps even visit the villages of their ancestors. But that is not why they return. They call upon an atavistic memory, necessary for survival in a changing world, a nostalgia for a past never experienced—a golden as well as dark age from which their families originated. It is a consolidation of private remembrances, at times quite scarce or made up through storytelling; yet it is nevertheless useful in reconstructing a family tree, for example, if in need of an Italian passport. Indeed, the faded copy of a grandfather's document becomes a precious item in the public sphere, making it possible to reverse the direction of emigration from Europe, which is not as uncommon as expected for young Italian Americans (especially those from Latin America).

Indeed, Stefano Luconi reports "a roughly seven-percent increase from 1990 in the number of U.S. residents who claimed Italian ancestry," and explains, "this increase demonstrates that Italian American ethnic identity is increasingly vital and more significant than any sense of belonging based on racial affiliation."[126] Undoubtedly, the community intensified its involvement and interest both in Italian matters and studies, and in its own history within it, developing a field of Italian American studies (which is still in its infancy in the home country). Class and race too remain dynamic forces that constantly revive identity issues.[127] As Alba argues: "The twilight of ethnicity among white ethnic groups does not imply that their disappearance is imminent. This is a twilight that will not in the near future and may never, turn into night."[128]

Italian Americanness seems to be a relevant cultural category, which has not yet found enough application in films studies. However, Italian Americanness is manifest in a multiplicity of experiences, related to both origins and geography: an Italian American might have a very different cultural experience of identity depending on whether he is in New Jersey or in San Francisco. Whenever conceptualizations of Italian Americanness forget this distinction, overgeneralization irremediably damages the overall cultural profile of the diasporic community. In the United States, *Italian* may well have implied the numerical and cultural prevalence of the Mezzogiorno, but from the 1890s to today, it has widened and has become really "Italian," albeit an "unfinished Italian" since the process of "making the Italians" (and the Americans) is eternally unfinished—in Italy as well as abroad.

Italian Americanness has become a complex process in the United States, but since the 1930s, and especially after 1945, it has recognized its language and history as Italian, even if it clings to the rigid stereotype derived from the Neapolitan synecdoche, only to find out, like Tony Soprano in Naples, that it is very different from what was expected.

Although the American entertainment media today feature more Italian American policemen than criminals and Italian women are more and more numerous—while still insisting on the stereotypes of mothers, food, and machismo—there seems to be an apparent stability in the status of Italian Americanness. The polemics about the representation of the community have become increasingly ritualistic, due to the consciousness that the achievements are such that these prejudiced representations cannot really damage the social standing of Italian Americans. Perhaps the stereotypical representation of the ethnic group in American media reinforces (maybe even constructs) their indirect "memory" of Italian behaviors and values.

Identity is a dynamic construction that can oscillate between the Italian and American polarities, depending on sociohistorical conditions, but a well-developed cosmopolitanism and an inexhaustible curiosity about the other could, at last, halt the building of walls and ghettoes, and let all migratory birds fly free in a common sky.

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NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Thomas Bender, introduction to *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, edited by Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 7. In the same volume, see David A. Hollinger, "The Historian's Use of the United States and Vice Versa," 381–396; Dirk Hoerder, "From Euro and Afro-Atlantic to the Pacific Migration System," 195–235; and Charles Bright and Michael Geyer, "Where in the World is America?," 63–100. On migrations, see Donna R. Gabaccia and Dirk Hoerder, eds., *Connecting Seas and Connected Ocean Rims: Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans and China Seas Migrations from the 1830s to the 1930s* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Dirk Hoerder and Nora Faires, eds., *Migrants and Migrations in Modern North America* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2011); and Patrick Manning, *Migrations in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

2. Thomas Bender, in *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), notes: "American leaders . . . associated themselves in a more self-conscious way with 'America,' using the word to refer not to the continent but to the United States. It was assumed that the whole hemisphere was an extension of this Unites States-centered America" (113).

3. Tania Friedel, *Racial Discourse and Cosmopolitanism in Twentieth-Century African American Writing* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 7. See also David Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

4. Furthermore, "the subaltern origins of these identities, embedded in a culture of resistance to assimilation, group solidarities, and assertiveness, have made them meaningful for and usable by other working-class people, including African Americans and other people of color." Simone Cinotto, introduction to *Making Italian America: Consumer Culture and the Production of Ethnic Identities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 3.

5. William McNeill, *The Rise of the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992).

6. Mark Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1.

7. Donna R. Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1999): 1120. "[The big wave of emigration was] enormous in magnitude, the largest population movement ever known. In a span of 100 years, 38 million people arrived, entering a nation that had a population of only 13 million at the period's opening." Richard Alba, *Italian Americans into the Twilight of Ethnicity* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1985), 5. On the Italian diaspora, see Donna R. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (London: University College of London Press, 2000); Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi, and Emilio Franzina, *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, 2 vols. (Rome: Donzelli, 2001); Stefano Luconi and Matteo Pretelli, *L'immigrazione negli Stati Uniti* (Bologna: Mulino, 2008); Pasquale Verdicchio, *Bound by Distance: Rethinking Nationalism through*

the Italian Diaspora (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997); Loretta Baldassar and Donna Gabaccia, eds., *Intimacy and Italian Migration: Gender and Domestic Lives in a Mobile World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011); Samuel L. Bailey, *Immigrants in the Land of Promise: Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870–1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Nancy Carnevale, *A New Language, a New World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); and Laura Ruberto and Joseph Sciorra, *New Italian Migrations to the U.S.*, 2 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017).

8. On the racialization of the "new immigrants," see David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2005), in particular the articulated discussion of race and ethnicity in chapter 1 and part II, 57–132.

9. Joseph P. Cosco, *Imagining Italians: The Clash of Romance and Race in American Perceptions, 1880/1910* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 3–4.

10. Nelson Moe, introduction to *The View from the Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 1. See also Jane Schneider, ed., *Italy's Southern Question: Orientalism in One Country* (Oxford: Berg, 1998); Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris, *The New History of the Italian South* (Devon, UK: University of Exeter, 1997); John Dickie, *Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno 1860–1900* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); and Aliza S. Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861–1911: Meridionalism, Empire, and the Diaspora* (New York: Macmillan, 2006). Very interesting historical documentation on the Savoy government in southern Italy and its relations with the Camorra is contained in Francesco Benigno, *La mala setta: Alle origini di mafia e camorra 1859–1878* (Turin: Einaudi, 2015).

11. Schneider, *Italy's Southern Question*, 1. Inspired by Said's reflections on Orientalism, the book analyzes the historical and cultural construction of the image of the *Mezzogiorno*.

12. Dickie, *Darkest Italy*, 11.

13. The classic approach to Naples and the South is represented by Giuseppe Galasso, *Il Mezzogiorno nella storia d'Italia* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1977); and Galasso ed., *Napoli* (Bari: Laterza, 1987). Gallaso writes: "For a long time Naples was a metropolis second only to Paris in Europe in terms of the numbers of its population," Galasso argues, "but it had a productive, commercial, financial structure far less inferior than that of smaller cities like Genoa" because it did not develop "capitalist and managerial energies. Galasso, *Napoli*, xiv, xix. In the same book, Giovanni Brancaccio states that after unity, Naples collapsed into a terrible crisis and that within thirty years it transformed "from a hegemonic center of the best human and material resources of the South," into a "deconstructed urban reality." "Una economia, una società," in Galasso, *Napoli*, 100.

14. Dickie, *Darkest Italy*, 9.

15. Ibid. 4. The southern question was "integral to the way a set of values and a cultural identity were articulated: they emerged within specific discourses of 'moralism,' patriotism, liberalism and positivist social analysis" (ibid., 53, 55).

16. Ibid., 1.

17. Ibid., 14.

18. The differences between the two geographies "were never the basis for collective political demands made in the name of the North as a whole *against* the national state or the South." Ibid., 10.

19. "A picturesque scene, custom, or figure is foreign enough to be exotic, to belong to the poetic margin beyond a humdrum reality, and yet familiar enough to be soothingly Italian" (ibid., 92). Dickie specifies: Stereotypes are functions of social identities, including regional and national identities" (6).

20. Giorgio Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

21. “The South and its people exist primarily as a set of textual figures inserted into a grid of obsessively reiterated binary oppositions, of which the pair nature-culture is one of the most important.” Dickie, *Darkest Italy*, 92.

22. See Emilio Franzina, “Italian Prejudice against Italian Americans,” in *Mediated Ethnicity: New Italian-American Cinema*, ed. Muscio, Sciorra, Spagnoletti, and Tamburri (New York: John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, 2010), 17–32; Salvatore Lupo, *Verso l’America* (Rome: Donzelli, 2005); and Manlio Graziano, *The Failure of Nationhood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Galasso discusses the ancient roots of the negative stereotype of Neapolitans in *L’altra Europa: Per un’antropologia storica del Mezzogiorno d’Italia* (Milan: Mondadori, 1982), 143–190.

23. On the nativist reaction, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1890–1925* (New Brunswick, NY: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); David Richards, *Italian American: The Racializing of an Ethnic Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Werner Sollors, ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, *Gli Italiani sono bianchi?* (Milan: Il saggiatore, 2003); Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890–1940* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh and Anna Scacchi, eds. *Parlare di razza* (Verona: Ombre corte, 2012).

24. Cosco, *Imagining Italians*, 2.

25. See Carnevale, *New Language*, 161–162. “One necessity in any writing of the history of ‘new immigrants’ and racial formation is that the account must be jarring enough to keep us from slipping back into easy assumptions that all European immigrants were simply white and that their stories were always ones of assimilation (or not) into American rather than specifically white American ways” (Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*, 7).

26. Cerase, “L’onda di ritorno: i rimpatri,” in *Storia dell’emigrazione italiana*, 1:116; Uricchio, states that the percentage reached 73 percent between 1907 and 1911. See Uricchio, “L’Italia Americana, l’America di Valentino,” in *Valentino*, ed. Paola Cristalli (Ancona: Cinegrafie, 1996), 94.

27. Donna Gabaccia, *Emigranti* (Torino: Einaudi, 2003), 73, my translation.

28. “Even the histories of European immigration in the United States . . . privilege[d] a vision of American consumerism as an assimilationist force and fail[ed] to acknowledge the role of immigrants in shaping it.” Simone Cinotto, *Making Italian America*, 2. See also Cinotto, *The Italian American Table: Food, Family, and Community in New York City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Edvige Giunta and Samuel J. Patti, eds., *A Tavola: Food, Tradition, and Community Among Italian Americans* (Staten Island, NY: American Italian Historical Association, 1998); Gloria Ricci Lathrop, ed., *Fulfilling the Promise of California: An Anthology of Essays on the Italian American Experience in California* (Spokane, WA: California Italian American Task Force and The Arthur Clark Co., 2000); Andrew Rolle, *Westward the Immigrants: Italian Adventures and Colonists in an Expanding America* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1999); and Sebastian Fichera, *Italy on the Pacific: San Francisco’s Italian Americans* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

29. Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Vintage, 1976).

30. “The same economic transformation that produced the new wealth of America’s best-off social segments also produced the new positions that opened up the lower end of the economic ladder at this time; so that the immigrants who came in mounting waves to enlarge a new class of urban poor and low-wage workers were living at the other end of the same world of opportunity exploited by the contemporaneous leisure class.” Richard H. Broadhead, “Strangers on a Train: The Double Dream of Italy in the American Gilded Age,” *Modernism/Modernity* 1, no. 2 (1994): 4.

31. "The social and representational equations between Americans and Italy/Italians start to change around 1880, when large numbers of these sometimes picturesque, sometimes 'Other' Italians turned up in America, challenged America's self-identity, and forever changed America's social fabric" (Cosco, *Imagining Italians*, 8).

32. Broadhead, "Strangers on a Train," 8.

33. Thomas Heck, *Commedia dell'Arte; a Guide to the Primary and Secondary Literature* (New York: Garland, 1988). "In 1637 the first commercial production of opera took place in Venice, a mercantile republic without an extravagant court but with a large elite public accustomed to theatre. . . . Costumes, stage effects, and virtuoso singers made the text virtually irrelevant, and the focus of attention became the arias." Tommaso Astarita, "The Grand Tour Heads South," in *Between Salt Water and Holy Water: A History of Southern Italy* (New York: Norton, 2005), 229.

34. See Sebastiano Martelli, "Premessa," *Oltre la Serenissima: Goldoni, Napoli e la cultura meridionale* (Napoli: Liguori, 2012).

35. See Galasso, *Il Mezzogiorno nella storia d'Italia* and *Napoli* (Bari: Laterza, 1987). A revisionist "new Bourbon" historiography influences Angelo Forgione, *Made in Naples: Come Napoli ha civilizzato l'Europa* (Milan: Magenes, 2013).

36. Astarita, *Between Salted Water and Holy Water*, 233.

37. "It was Naples that offered the concrete basis to give Mezzogiorno the unitary character of its historical and anthropological connotation." Galasso, "Tradizione, metamorfosi e identità di un'antica capitale," in *Napoli*, xiii–xiv.

38. Astarita, *Between Salted Water and Holy Water*, 236.

39. Genovesi, Filangeri, and Pagano kicked off a debate that addressed the relationship between state and church (*giurisdizionalismo*) for the first time. See Galasso "La parabola del Giurisdizionalismo," in *Il Mezzogiorno nella storia d'Italia*, 237–263, and "Aspetti dell'illuminismo," in ibid., 264–298. See also Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, 2 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1987–1990).

40. Astarita, 233. On Mozart's experiences in Naples, see also Forgione, *Made in Naples*, 99–101.

41. "Music continued to be a vital form of expression for diasporic Italians in the city—and as significant a part of Italian children's upbringing . . . —well into the postwar years." Simone Cinotto, "Italian Doo-Wop: Sense of Place, Politics of Style, and Racial Crossovers in Postwar New York City," in Cinotto, *Making Italian America*, 163–177, 165.

42. Simona Frasca, *Birds of Passage* (New York: Palgrave, 2014), 1–2, and Forgione, *Made in Naples*, 103–112. See also Roberto De Simone, *La canzone napolitana* (Torino: Einaudi, 2017); Goffredo Plastino and Joseph Sciorra, eds., *Neapolitan Postcards: The Canzone Napoletana as Transnational Subject* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016). The proceedings of a conference on "La canzone napoletana tra memoria e innovazione" have been published in as an e-book, edited by Anita Pesce and Marialuisa Stazio, www.issm.cnr.it/pubblicazioni/ebook/canzone_napoletana/canzone_napoletana.pdf.

43. On Neapolitan cinema, see Adriano Aprà, ed., *Napoletana: Images of a City (*Milan: Fabbri, 1994), especially Vittorio Martinelli, "The Evolution of Neapolitan Cinema to 1930," 29–74; Stefano Masi and Mario Franco, *Il mare, la luna i coltelli. Per una storia del cinema muto napoletano* (Naples: Pironti, 1988); and Pasquale Iaccio, ed., *L'alba del cinema in Campania* (Naples: Liguori, 2010).

44. On Notari, see Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), Enza Troianelli *Elvira Notari pioniera del cinema napoletano* (1875–1946) (Roma: Euroma, 1989) and Paolo Speranza, ed., *La film di Elvira* (Avellino: Arti Grafiche Boccia, 2016).

45. After the unification "lost its ancient center of gravitation as a class, Neapolitan aristocracy did not recompose others of analogous public relevance." Galasso, *Napoli*, xxii.

46. Notari produced and directed the early *Guerra italo-turca tra scugnizzi napoletani* (1912), using also documentary material, *Tricolore* (1913), *Addio mia bella addio . . . l'armata se ne va* (1915), *Figlio del reggimento* (1915), *Sempre avanti, Savoia!* (1915), and *Gloria ai caduti* (1916).

47. The song was composed in 1898, lyrics by Giovanni Capurro and music by Eduardo Di Capua, written when he was playing in an orchestra in Odessa—transnational from its very birth. Actually, it was played instead of the Royal March at the Olympics of 1920. In 1961, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin took the song on the first space travel ever.

48. In 1928, an official document proclaimed that it would no longer tolerate: "films with street singers, beggars, *scugnizzi*, dirty *vicoli* (narrow degraded streets), tatters and people devoted to idleness (*dolce far niente*) that slander a population who works and tries to elevate itself to the tone of the social and material life that the Regime is impressing to the country; considered that these films are made without any artistic quality, unworthy of the beauty that nature has lavished onto the land of Naples, it has been decided to refuse the approval of films which persist in *cliches* which offend the dignity of Naples and of the entire Region" (Speranza, *La film di Elvira*, 88).

49. Sergio Germani, Simone Starace, and Roberto Turigliatto, *Titanus: Cronaca familiare del cinema italiano* (Rome: Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, 2014).

50. "The European vocation was as ancient and deep as its Mediterranean, Italian and Southern specificity" (Galasso, *Napoli*, xxxiii).

51. Cinotto, *Making Italian America*, 165. However, Cosco notes how American attitudes changed in time. "Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Italian opera was being criticized as lowbrow and compared unfavorably to German/Wagnerian opera, just as Italian immigrants were being disparaged in comparison to German immigrants . . . the *New York Daily Tribune* dismissed Italian opera as 'the sweetmeats of the hurdy-gurdy repertory'" (Cosco, *Imagining Italians*, 184).

52. Baldassar and Gabaccia, "Home, Family, and the Italian Nation in a Mobile World," in *Intimacy*, 1, 21.

53. "They were swarthy, more than half of them were illiterate, and almost all were victims of a standard of living lower than that of any of the other prominent nationalities emigrating to America" (Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 66).

54. Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema*, 50.

55. "Their heritage—southern Italy, or *black Italy*—was what made them racially different and refractory to complete assimilation in America. . . . However their consumer culture at the same time reinterpreted *white Italy*: the classical world of Roman greatness, cradle of Western civilizations and its racial superiority, the Renaissance, and the masters of opera" (Cinotto, *Making Italian America*, 27).

56. See Carnevale, *New Language*, 198n55.

57. Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American 1900–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

58. Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through 20th Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005), 5. See also Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 10.

59. de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 289, my emphasis.

60. See Giuliana Muscio, "Gilberto Rossi e la sua avventura cinematografica in Brasile," unpublished paper, Naples, November 22, 2004.

61. Aldo Bernardini, *Cinema muto italiano 1910–1914* (Bari: Laterza, 1982), 141.

62. de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 3.

63. Ibid., 299.

64. de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 3–4. See also Kristin Thompson, *America in the World Market 1907–1934* (London: BFI, 1985).

65. de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 300, my emphasis.

66. Emelise Aleandri, *The Italian-American Immigrant Theatre of New York City* (Charleston, NC: Arcadia, 1999); Lawrence Estavan, *The Italian Theatre in San Francisco* (San Bernardino: Borgo Press, 1991); Peter Bondanella, *Hollywood Italians* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Pellegrino D'Acierno, *The Italian American Heritage: A Companion to Literature and Arts* (New York: Garland, 1999); Anthony Tamburri, *Re-reading Italian Americana* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013); and Salvatore LaGumina, *Hollywood's Italians: From Periphery to Prominenti* (Amherst, NY: Teneo Press, 2012). Other titles deal with the representation of Italians or specific Italian or Italian American performers.

67. Gianni Puccini, "Italiani nel mondo del cinema," *Cinema*, no. 20, April 25, 1937, 329–331.

68. See William J. Connell and Fred Gardaphé, *Anti-Italianism: Essays on a Prejudice* (New York: Palgrave, 2010); Andrew Ross and Kristin Ross, *Anti-Americanism* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); and Paul Hollander, ed., *Anti-Americanism: Its Origins and Impact at Home and Abroad* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004).

69. On Germans in Hollywood, see de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 284–335; Tim Bergfelder, "German Actors in Hollywood: The Long View," in *Journey of Desire*, 37–45; Thomas Elsaesser, "Ethnicity, Authenticity, and Exile," in Hamid Naficy, ed., *Home*, *Exile*, *Homeland* (London: Routledge, 1999), 97–123; and Peter Kramer, "Hollywood in Germany/Germany in Hollywood," in *The German Cinema Book*, ed. Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter, and Deniz Goturk (London: BFI, 2002), 227–237.

1. ITALIAN PERFORMERS IN AMERICAN SILENT CINEMA

1. John Corbin, "Shakspere [*sic*] in the Bowery," *Harper's Weekly*, March 12, 1898, 244–246, Maiori clipping files, Rose NY. All excerpts from Corbin are from this source. On the Italian theater in the United States, see Emelise Aleandri, *The Italian-American Immigrant Theatre of New York City* (Charleston, NC: Arcadia, 1999) and her A History of Italian-American Theatre: 1900 to 1905 (PhD diss., City University of New York 1984); Lawrence Estavan, *The Italian Theatre in San Francisco* (San Bernardino: Borgo Press, 1991); and Anna Maria Martellone, "Il teatro delle Little Italy: La costruzione di un'identità italo-americana," *Rivista di Studi Anglo-Americani* (RSA) 10, no. 12 (2000): 240–248.

2. Probably what is meant here is "contemporary" Italian, in contrast with literary Italian. The complex issues related to the language spoken by the Italian immigrants are thoroughly discussed in Nancy Carnevale, *A New Language, a New World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

3. Lawrence Levine, "William Shakespeare in America," in *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 86–87; William Uricchio and Roberta E. Pearson, *Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 65–110; and Marvin Carlson, *The Italian Shakespearians: Performances by Ristori, Salvini, and Rossi* (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1985).

4. Levine, "William Shakespeare in America," 21.

5. Corbin here distinguishes the "elder" Salvini, Tommaso, from his son Alexander Salvini, who had toured with his father and remained in the United States

6. "*Grande attore italiano*" refers to a tradition of naturalistic acting specific to Italian performers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries such as Salvini, Ernesto Rossi, and Eleonora Duse, whose international popularity was immense. On Duse, see Maria Pia Pagani and Paul Fryer, eds., *Eleonora Duse and Cenere* (London: McFarland, 2017).

7. Owen Kildare, "Bowery Salvini Sees Success After Trials," unidentified New York publication, August 30, 1902; "Dramatic Lion Discovered. Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer and Her Friends

Found Him. His Name Is Maiori, and He Is an Italian Tragedian," unidentified Boston publication, August 31, 1902, Maiori clipping files, Rose NY.

8. Konstantin Stanislavsky, *An Actor's Work: A Student Diary* [1938] (London: Routledge, 2008), 19. Henry James criticized Salvini as "all sentiment and passion, without that intellectual iridescence, which, in a personality drama, is the mark of Shakespeare." Henry James, "Tommaso Salvini," *Atlantic Monthly* 51, no. 105 (March 1883): 376–386.

9. Kildare, "Bowery Salvini."

10. Martellone, "Il teatro delle Little Italy," 241, my translation.

11. Ibid.

12. "He performed a "seven-act drama, given with wretched scenery and costumes, and a very poor supporting company, besides being played in Italian" but "these scoffing blasé, world-rich people so thoroughly appreciated it that they sat breathless until after one o'clock at night in the dirty Bowery theatre." Unidentified author, "Dramatic Lion Discovered," Maiori clipping files, Rose Library, NY.

13. "When, in 1906, Maiori played Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* at the People's Theatre . . . at 43–47 Bowery, Yiddish actor Jacob P. Adler was performing his Shylock at Proctor's Fifth Avenue Theatre on 28th Street. The critics couldn't resist the inevitable comparisons; there was much racing back and forth to catch one act uptown and another downtown to review both stars" (Aleandri, *Italian-American Immigrant Theatre*, 38, 45).

14. Ibid., 49. On the nickelodeons, see Sabine Haenni, *The Immigrant Scene: Ethnic Amusements in New York, 1880–1920* (Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 2008); and Giorgio Bertellini, "Ethnic Self-Fashioning at the *Cafè Chantant*," in *Public Space/Private Lives: Race, Gender, Class, and Citizenship in New York, 1890–1929*, ed. William Boelhower and Anna Scacchi (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2004), 39–66.

15. Kildare, "Bowery Salvini." In Maiori's case no travel in South America has been documented.

16. There were winemakers from Tuscany and Piedmont, sailors from Liguria and Campania, farmers from Veneto and Friuli, as well as Sicilian fishermen. On Italians in California, see Gloria Ricci Lothrop, ed., *Fulfilling the Promise of California: An Anthology of Essays on the Italian American Experience in California* (Spokane, WA: California Italian American Task Force and The Arthur Clark Co., 2000); and Andrew Rolle, *Westward the Immigrants: Italian Adventures and Colonists in an Expanding America* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1999).

17. Estavan, *Italian Theatre in San Francisco*, 19. All the citations in this section come from this source.

18. In the film, Maiori is Soldo, a vengeful servant belonging to the Mafia who, together with his *compare* Villato (played by Cesare Gravina), kidnaps an American child (Pickford). The girl escapes to the United States but, quite by chance, meets the same two *mafiosi* who hire her to spread counterfeit money. She is arrested, but a friend, a young district attorney, discovers her true (American) origins, saves her, and manages to imprison the two Italian criminals.

19. For a vast, and discontinuous, bibliography on the representation of Italians, see Peter Bondanella, *Hollywood Italians: Dagos, Palookas, Romeos, Wise Guys and Sopranos* (New York: Continuum 2004); Ilaria Serra, *The Imagined Immigrant* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson, 2009); Giorgio Bertellini, "Black Hands and White Hearts. Immigrants as Urban Racial Types in Early Twentieth-Century American Cinema," *Urban History* 31, no. 3 (2004): 374–398; and Flaminio Di Biagi, *Italoamericani: tra Hollywood e Cinecittà* (Milan: Le Mani, 2010).

20. *Peppina* appears more realistic in the depiction of Italian settings if compared with the film most often discussed in reference to the representation of Italians, *The Italian* (Reginald Barker, 1916) studied in depth by Giorgio Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010) which even shows mules pulling a wagon on a Venice bridge.

21. According to Aleandri, the actor returned to Italy in 1919 but was back in New York in 1927. See Aleandri, *Italian-American Immigrant Theatre*, 49. His name (as A. Maiori) appears in

the cast of *Mamma mia che vo' sape'* and *Napule ca se ne va*, both by Ubaldo Maria del Colle (1925, 1926) according to the filmographies compiled by Vittorio Martinelli, *Il cinema italiano muto 1923–1931* (Rome: BN 1984), 228–229, 279.

22. Unidentified newspaper item, Maiori clipping files, Rose NY.

23. Aleandri, *History of Italian Theatre*, 6.

24. Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage 1994), 42–43. On the star system, see Richard Dyer, *Star* (London: BFI, 1979); Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

25. See the fundamental work by Paul Fryer, *The Opera Singer and The Silent Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006).

26. Bram Dijkstra, *Evil Sisters: The Threat of Female Sexuality and the Cult of Manhood* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996).

27. Richard deCordova, *Picture Personality: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

28. The documentaries *The Voice of the Century* and *The Tenors of the 78 Era* in the series *Bel Canto* propose interviews with singers and critics on Caruso's work. On Caruso, see, for example, Dorothy Caruso, *Enrico Caruso: His Life and Death* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945); Enrico Jr. Caruso and Andrew Farkas, *Enrico Caruso: My Father and My Family* (Portland, OR: Amadeus, 1990); Pietro Gargano, Gianni Cesarini, and Michael Aspinali, *Caruso* (Milano: Longanesi, 1990); Michael Scott, *The Great Caruso* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1988); Francis Robinson, *Caruso: His Life in Pictures* (New York: Studio Publishing, 1957); and Howard Greenfield, *Caruso* (New York: Putnam's, 1983).

29. Fryer, *Opera Singer*, 173.

30. Coppola's grandfather, Francesco Pennino, claimed to have accompanied Caruso at the piano in *cafés-chantants* in Naples (Pennino Collection, SF).

31. In the nineteenth century, the use of gas and later electric lighting in theaters facilitated a style of performance where gestures and make-up became more natural.

32. In a hotel room converted into a studio, he recorded ten opera arias for Fred Gaisberg of the Gramophone and Typewriter Company.

33. "The male tenor voice was the easiest to record because of its frequency range: the overtones and strong *vibrato* in Caruso's voice etched a particularly 'brilliant' tone as well as a high fidelity to the 'aura' of a live performance." Marsha Siefert, "Aesthetics, Technology, and the Capitalization of Culture: How the Talking Machine Became a Musical Instrument," *Science in Context* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 417–449, 439. See also Marsha Siefert, "The Audience at Home: The Early Recording Industry and the Marketing of Musical Taste," in *Audiencemaking: How the Media Create the Audience*, ed. James S. Ettema and D. Charles Whitney (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing 1994), 186–214.

34. Heinrich Conried, the newly appointed director of the Metropolitan, heard Caruso's 1902 recording of "Vesti la giubba" because Pasquale Simonelli, an Italian banker based in New York, who had heard Caruso in Italy, promoted him through these records. See Fryer, *Opera Singer*, 18.

35. Ibid., 126. Even if opera constituted only 3 percent of the company sales, opera records—and those of the tenor of the Met—had a symbolic function in social standing: "They could be displayed in the refined American parlor with pride, alongside leather-bound sets of Dickens, Thackeray and Oliver Wendell Holmes" (Siefert, "Audience at Home," 207).

36. Marziale Sisca collected the caricatures Caruso drew for "La Follia di New York," published in *Caruso's Caricatures* (New York: Dover, 1977).

37. "Caruso tins for sewing needles; cans of Enrico Caruso Olive Oil based in Carlstadt, New Jersey (100 olive oil for Italians; a blend of 75 percent peanut and 25 percent olive oils "for 'merican"); Caruso Grated Parmesan Cheese, Caruso Soup Mix; and Caruso Mushroom Sauce."

Mark Rotella, *Amore: The Story of Italian American Song* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2010), 13.

38. For the citations from newspapers in this segment see Fryer, *Opera Singer*, 20–23. On the scandal, see also Gargani, Cesarini, and Aspinali, "Il giallo dello zoo," in *Caruso*, 74–82.

39. Fryer, *Opera Singer*, 23.

40. In January 1906, the *New York Evening Telegram* published this feature: "Everyone is wondering now if Signor Caruso eats garlic. Because if he does eat garlic then everybody thinks that there shouldn't be another performance of *Tosca* at the Metropolitan Opera House this winter." The anonymous writer continued stating that "neither Emma Eames or Lillian Nordica should have their delicate sensibilities over-taxed by the smell of garlic on the breath of their leading man" (Fryer, *Opera Singer*, 19). Fryer never remarks (or detects) the anti-Italian attitudes beneath these press materials.

41. Enzo Catania, *Dalla Mano Nera a Cosa Nostra* (Milan: Boroli, 2006), Rotella, *Amore*, 38–40.

42. Caruso interview, *Evening World*, undated clipping, Caruso Collection, Peabody Institute.

43. On this experience, see Paul Fryer, "Enrico Caruso, The Reluctant Movie Star," *Griffithiana*, no. 64 (October 1998): 143–171.

44. All of the materials in this section, unless otherwise stated, are from the Caruso Collection at the Peabody Institute. In another undated clipping, apparently written in August during the filming, G(uglielmo) Ricciardi wrote in Italian, probably for *La Follia di New York*: "Cesare Gravina . . . assisted the great artist in clothing, make up and as an affectionate friend, who guessed his thoughts."

45. The film is currently available, albeit in poor condition, on a popular video website. In the synopsis for the *AFI Catalog*, 1911–1929, at p. 643, the characters' names do not correspond to the ones in the actual film.

46. William Ricciardi was wrongly credited as Joseph Ricciardi.

47. In the Italian restaurant, after his performance of *Pagliacci*, while everybody is praising the tenor, Caroli, who does not want to be recognized, comments: "You'll have to excuse me, but I am not so fond of that tenor as you are. . . . He has his faults."

48. Undated and untitled clipping, Caruso Collection, Peabody Institute.

49. Fryer, *Opera Singer*, 193.

50. "Starring Enrico Caruso," an exhibit curated by Giuliana Muscio for the Cineteca of Bologna in June 2010.

51. "This viewing took place immediately after the solemnization of his marriage to Dorothy. Dorothy recalled that as soon as the ceremony was concluded 'we set out briskly for the studio of the Famous Players, where Enrico's motion picture was to be shown for the first time'" (Fryer, *Opera Singer*, 190).

52. Novelizations were short stories narrating the plot of the film in a literary mode. The Caruso Collection at the Peabody Institute holds George W. Rogers, "My Cousin," *Moving Picture Stories*, November 15, 1918 (date penciled), 19–22, and Frances Wood, "My Cousin," *Picture Play*, December 1918 (date penciled), 240–248.

53. Clipping at the Peabody Institute, partially cited also by Fryer (*Opera Singer*, 187), who dated it December 7, 1918.

54. Undated clipping, *Motion Picture Magazine*, 44–48, Caruso Collection, Peabody Institute.

55. See the novel by Mary di Michele, *Tenor of Love* (New York: Touchstone, 2004).

56. Fryer, *Opera Singer*, 196.

57. Estavan, *Italian Theatre in San Francisco*, 83–84.

58. Giovanni Sciavo, ed., *Italian-American Who's Who* (New York: Vigo Press 1942), 7:13.

59. *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo* (Rome: Le Maschere, 1954–1962), 185. See also Simona Frasca, *Birds of Passage* (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2010), 133–136.

60. Estavan, *Italian Theatre in San Francisco*, 83.

61. Aguglia's daughter Argentina Brunetti wrote a "novelization" of her biography. Brunetti, *In Sicilian Company* (Boalsburg, PA: Bear Manor Media, 2005).

62. Ibid., 22–23; Estevan, *Italian Theatre in San Francisco*, 79, 81; Vincenzo Privitera, *Enciclopedia dei teatri e degli spettacoli a Catania nell'Ottocento* (Catania: Litostampa, 2000), 62.

63. Ettore De Mura, *Enciclopedia della canzone napoletana* (Naples: Il Torchio, 1969), 15.

64. "Signora Aguglia has done such fine dancing with seven veils that Boston vendors gave her version of Oscar Wilde's classic the same ban as 'Tobacco Road.'" Unidentified clipping, dated September 11, 1937, Aguglia clipping files, Rose NY.

65. Her daughter, born in Buenos Aires in 1907, was named Argentina, and became an actress too, as Argentina Brunetti.

66. See Donna R. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (London: University College of London Press, 2000).

67. Brunetti, *In Sicilian Company*, 57–61.

68. "The vogue of the Sicilians in the French capital was enormous, the Parisians flocking in enthusiastic crowds to witness their performances, and this success has been repeated on even a greater scale in the British metropolis. Negotiations are already pending for the appearance of the players in America." "The Latest Theatrical Sensation—The Sicilian Players," *New York Telegraph*, November 26, 1906, Aguglia clipping files, Rose NY.

69. *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*, 185.

70. Estavan, *Italian Theatre in San Francisco*, 85; my emphasis. On the volcano as a recurring image associated with Southern Italian culture and on its implications, see Nelson Moe, *The View from the Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 43–45.

71. "The Latest Theatrical Sensation," Aguglia clipping files, Rose NY.

72. Charles Dranton, "The Sicilian Players," *Stageland*, May 1909, Aguglia clipping files, Rose NY.

73. Giuseppe Cautela, "The Italian Theatre in New York," *La Follia di New York*, October 2, 1927, also published in the corresponding issue of Mencken's *American Mercury*.

74. "Mimi Aguglia Here to Act in Tragedy" *New York Times*, November 22, 1908.

75. Mimì Aguglia was so popular in Mexico that (she claimed) during the revolution there was a special cease-fire in order to allow the contenders to attend her performances. See Brunetti, *In Sicilian Company*, 71–78.

76. Ibid., 61.

77. Ibid., 66.

78. See Mark Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). On colonialism, see Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, eds., *Italian Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005); Patrizia Palumbo, *A Place in the Sun: Africa in Italian Colonial from Post-Unification to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), and Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Fascism Empire Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

79. An article in the *Toledo Blade* stated: "Mimì Aguglia, the Sicilian actress who was seen on Broadway last year in John Cort's production 'The Whirlwind' is now playing an eight-week season of Italian repertoire at the Olympic Theatre on 14th Street. Miss Aguglia's repertoire includes *Zaza*, *Malia*, *The Passion Flower*, *Hamlet*, *Camille*, *La figlio di Jorio*, *Fedora*, *La Buitta*, *Tosca* and *The Bear*." This was not an "Italian repertoire" but indicates her move from "Sicilian actress" to Italian performer with an international profile. *Toledo Blade*, December 23, 1913, Aguglia clipping files, Rose NY.

80. David Warfield, "The Remarkable Italian Actress at the Broadway Theatre," *New York Star*, November 28, 1908, Aguglia clipping files, Rose NY.

81. Estavan also proposes an articulate analysis of her Salome; see *Italian Theatre in San Francisco*, 86–87.

82. "Known as "The Jest" in English it was later performed by the Barrymore family in 1919." Ibid., 85. This American performance of an Italian coeval drama confirms the tight interaction between these theatrical cultures.

83. Ibid., 88.

84. "The Sicilian actress who startled Broadway some years ago with her presentations of vivid native dramas, gave a single performance of an Italian drama entitled *Tenebre rosse* by Arturo Giovannitti of the editorial staff of *The Masses*, . . . at the People's Theatre in the Bowery. In the cast Teresa Cecchini, Sara Aguglia, Gustavo Cecchini, Vincenzo Ferrau, Raffaello Bongini, R. Aratoli, F. Ciampolini, Luigi Aguglia, Carlo Tricoli, Oreste Seragnoli, V. Piazza, I. Cianciotti, L. Ancona." Most of the names of these performers will return in later theatrical and film experiences. Unidentified clipping, October 15, 1916, Aguglia clipping files, Rose NY.

85. Brunetti, *In Sicilian Company*, 79–80. She sang *Carmen* on October 1, 1925 at BAM, and then in Cuba, with Tito Schipa (ibid., 101).

86. See John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1890–1925* (New Brunswick, NY: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through 20th Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press., 2005); and Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

87. "Mr. Fox had then offered my mother a cameo role . . . in his next movie, *The Last Man on Earth*. I remember going to watch my Mamma perform on the set in the Fox Brooklyn Studio. Her role consisted of one scene, and after three days of filming, she had concluded her movie career and had accumulated enough money to buy our tickets to Cuba" (Brunetti, *In Sicilian Company*, 108).

88. Ibid., 99–100.

89. On Modotti, see Margaret Hooks, *Tina Modotti: Photographer and Revolutionary* (London: First Glance Books, 1993); Valentina Agostinis, ed., *Tina Modotti: Gli anni luminosi* (Pordenone: Cinemazero, 1992); and Gianfranco Ellero, *Tina Modotti in Carinzia e in Friuli* (Pordenone: Cinemazero, 1996). The information on Modotti's career as a stage actress comes from Hooks's biography and Estavan's text, which devoted a section to her work as an actress (60–61).

90. Experience in photography was common in Friuli and Veneto, two regions that always specialized in optics.

91. See Loretta Baldassar and Donna Gabaccia, eds., *Intimacy and Italian Migration: Gender and Domestic Lives in a Mobile World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011); and Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1985).

92. Modotti also attended Aguglia's performances in 1914. See Hooks, *Tina Modotti*, 24.

93. Estavan, *Italian Theatre in San Francisco*, 60.

94. Ibid., 29.

95. See Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough, eds., *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Vittoria Caterina Caratozzolo, "Visibly Fashionable: The Changing Role of Clothes in the Everyday Life of Italian Immigrant Women," in *Making Italian America: Consumer Culture and the Production of Ethnic Identities*, ed. Simone Cinotto (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 35–56.

96. Lynn Dumenil, *Modern Temper, American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); Roderick Nash, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917–1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1970); Agostinis, *Tina Modotti*, 17; and Hooks, *Tina Modotti*, 37.

97. Agostinis, *Tina Modotti*, 17; Hooks, *Tina Modotti*, 37.

98. On Kleine, see Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema*, 183, 252; and Kim Tomadjoglou, "Rome's Premiere Film Studio: Società Italiana Cines," in *Italian Silent Cinema. A Reader*, ed. Bertellini (New Barnet: John Libbey, 2013), 97–113.

99. Diva films were Italian melodramas centered on the languid female stars of the time, *le dive*, such as Francesca Bertini and Lyda Borelli, who were very popular worldwide in the mid-1910s. The acting style was excessive and directly associated, in the case of Borelli, with the tradition of symbolist theater. See Angela Dalle Vacche, *Diva: Defiance and Passion in Early Italian Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

100. See Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890–1940* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, *Gli Italiani sono bianchi?* (Milan: Il saggiatore, 2003); and Werner Sollors, ed., *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). On the impact of in-betweenness for Mexicans, see Laura Isabel Serna, *Cinelandia: American Films and Mexican Film Culture Before the Golden Age* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

101. On the representation of ethnicity in American cinema, see Ian C. Jarvie, "Stars and Ethnicity: Hollywood and the United States, 1932–1951," in *Unspeakable Images. Ethnicity and the American Cinema*, ed. Lester D. Friedman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); and Laura Browder, *Ethnic Impersonators and American Identities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). For the same pattern of dislocation applied to other ethnoracial performers, see Daisuke Miyao, *Sessue Haykawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2007); Yman Wang, "The Art of Screen Passing: Anna May Wong's Yellowface Performance in the Art Deco Era," *Camera Obscura* 20, no. 3 (2005): 159–191; and Isabel Serna, *Cinelandia*, (in reference to Dolores Del Rio and Lupe Velez).

102. See David Richards, *Italian American: The Racializing of an Ethnic Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

103. Livio Jacob, "Tina Modotti a Hollywood," in Agostinis, *Tina Modotti*, 214–215.

104. Hooks, *Tina Modotti*, 36–37.

105. Ibid., 51.

106. She was interviewed when Mexico banned American films that were offensive to national identity. Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992), 171.

107. Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, "Radici e movimenti," in Agostinis, *Tina Modotti*, 91–94, 92.

108. Ibid.

109. Richard Abel, *Americanizing the Movies* and "Movie-Mad" Audiences 1910–1914 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) 35. Abel also writes: "Americanization had to be sustained through . . . the 'era of transition' and particularly through the years prior to the outbreak of World War I [. . .] after which 'foreign' films nearly were eliminated from the American market" (6).

110. "His Italian company broke up because so many of the players went to war." Caroline Bell, "An Actor of the Old School," *Picture Play Magazine*, February 1921. (Kevin Brownlow Collection). Some sources confuse Gravina with an Italian comedian at Ambrosio's, but Vittorio Martinelli established that it was a case of homonymy. The Author organized a special event on Gravina at *Giornate del Cinema Muto*. "Italiani a Hollywood: Cesare Gravina," in *28th Silent Film Festival*, festival catalog, Pordenone, 2010, 181–184.

111. "Gatti's Star Tenor Invading Domain of Movies Playing Double Role in 'My Cousin Caruso'" (undated clipping) illustrated by three pictures: one with Carolina White, Gravina, Caruso and Zirato at Fort Lee, and two publicity stills with Caruso and Lasky. Caruso Collection, Peabody Institute.

112. Richard Koszarski, *Von: The Life and Films of Erich von Stroheim* (New York: Limelight, 2004), 142.

113. With Jackie Coogan (of Chaplin's *The Kid* fame), he played in *Circus Days* and *Daddy*; with Lon Chaney, in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *The Phantom of the Opera*; with Pola Negri,

in *The Charmer* and *Flower of the Night*; with Gloria Swanson, in *Humming Bird*; and with Ramon Novarro, in *The Road to Romance*. In *The Trail of '98*, *a Western*, he was the blind father of Dolores Del Rio, and he appeared also in *The Divine Woman* with Greta Garbo and Lars Hanson.

114. Giuliana Muscio, "*The Man in Blue*" *Cinema Ritrovato*, exhibition catalog, Bologna, 2011, 77.

115. David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 2005), 3–4. Caruso's "scandal of the zoo" happened at the monkey cage, and even Valentino/Julio in *Four Horsemen* has a monkey as a pet. Organ grinders with monkeys "make [any scene] Italian."

116. "A Successful Portrayer of Failures" *Picture Play*, August 1924, 65. (Kevin Brownlow Collection) Gravina's performance was indeed memorable, and precedes the famous, similar scene in Chaplin's *Limelight* (1952).

117. Gianni Puccini, "Italiani nel mondo del cinema," *Cinema*, no. 20, April 25, 1937, 329.

118. In 1930, "Mantica Barzini" wrote that Gravina was back in Italy: "he retired in his Naples, to enjoy a well deserved repose, but he is always so lively and, who knows, he might go back to his interrupted activities." "Hollywood e gli Italiani," *Comoedia* 12, no. 5, May 15/June 15, 1930, 35–37, 37.

119. "Puglia started his career in New York at the age of fifteen, singing in the Sarnella operetta company." Studio biography for the promotion of *Ali Baba*, Puglia clipping file, Academy of Motion Picture arts and Sciences hereafter (AMPAS).

120. Arthur McClure, "The Unsung Heroes," *Film Fan Monthly*, August 1968, 10, 22. Puglia clipping files, Rose NY. See also Arthur McClure, *The Versatiles: Supporting Character Players in the Cinema 1930–1955* (South Brunswick: A. S. Barnes, 1969), 186.

121. Hooks, *Tina Modotti*, 29–30.

122. "In the Summer of 1921 he was engaged as an all-around performer in a stock company playing at the old Olympic Theatre on East 14th Street in New York. He played the villainous brother in a tear-jerker *The Two Orphans*, and his performance was witnessed by D.W. Griffith" (McClure, *Short Title*, 10).

123. Studio biography in Puglia clipping file, AMPAS.

124. As Carlo Gillardi, a gangster and Mama Gillardi's favorite, he owes his allegiance to Nick Da Silva (William Powell), who runs his dirty business behind the front of a Chinese theatre. His brother, Tony (Barthelemess), a humble flower vendor, falls in love with Mollie O'Connor (Gish) and ends up in prison to cover his misdeeds and spare their mother from shame and grief.

125. Studio biography in Puglia clipping file, AMPAS.

126. See profile in James Robert Parish, *Hollywood Character Actors* (New Rochelle: Arlington, 1978), 421–422.

127. See Guglielmo Ricciardi, *Ricciardiana* (New York: Eloquent Press, 1955); and Aleandri, *Italian-American Immigrant Theatre*, 19–29.

128. Walter Kerr, *The Silent Clowns* (New York: Knopf 1975), 292. See also Davide Turconi, *Monty Banks* (Cesena: Il Ponte Vecchio, 1997). Fatty Arbuckle indirectly suggested his stage name, referring to his playing "mountebanks."

129. Dorothy Spensley, "Open, Cesene!" *Photoplay*, August 1927, Monty Banks clipping files, AMPAS.

130. Puccini, "Italiani nel mondo del cinema," 329.

131. Of the Hanlons, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* writes: "They developed and performed sophisticated pantomimes—evening-long loosely plotted hodgepodges made up of broad physical comedy, dance, spectacular settings, stage magic, and comic songs—that displayed their physical acumen and employed comedy, violence, and macabre and eccentric visions . . . *Fantasma* (1884) and *Superba* (1890) . . . grafted their signature acrobatic slapstick onto fairy-tale plots with

spectacular tricks and transformations. Until 1912 the Hanlons sent an entirely reworked version of each show on the road each year, featuring all-new machinery and technical gags." Mark Cosdon, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1935571/Hanlon-Brothers.

132. "Albert Roccardi," *Moving Picture World*, December 12, 1914.

133. In the film, he has implicit Italian origins because he recognizes the woman claiming to be the mother of the "true" heir, as an opera singer he had seen in Milan.

134. For the sound period of his career, see chapters 4 and 5.

135. The circus was one of the forms of entertainment in which Italians excelled. Italian clown and vaudeville artist Jimmy Savo appeared in *Exclusive Rights* (Frank O'Connor, 1926) as a specialty dancer, and as Gabbo in *Once in a Blue Moon* (Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, 1935). The Lupino family (Ida Lupino's ancestors) came to America from the United Kingdom, where they had settled in the seventeenth century.

136. In "Hollywood e gli Italiani," Mantica Barzini spotlighted Lucio Flamma, credited in *The Beauty Shoppers* (Louis J. Gasnier, 1927) and *The King of Kings* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1927), who returned to Europe, in Berlin. The writer also listed Diana Dardo, Nena Quartaro, Lucrezia Donati, Ettore Sarno, and Marcella Battellini (Lola Salvi), who went to Hollywood with Alberto Rabagliati, having won the same Fox contest. In other professions, she mentioned Tony Gaudio, Martinelli, and Joe Valentino as cinematographers; Alfredo Sabato and Augusto Galli in set decoration; and filmmakers Robert Vignola, Frank Capra, Frank Borzage, and Gregory La Cava. The journalist even argued that Roy d'Arcy and Lon Chaney were Italian. In fact, according to Alberto Manetti, Lido's brother, Chaney was Leone Ciani, who spoke Tuscan dialect and was born in Livorno. Ago Raumo argued that Alice White, who had just appeared in the first screen adaptation of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, was Alva Sanfelice, born in Paterson, New Jersey, on August 26, 1908, to a couple just arrived from Milan. Ago Raumo, "Alice White, meneghina di Hollywood," *Kinema* III, November/December 1931, 37–38.

137. See Aldo Bernardini, "L'espansione internazionale," in *Cinema muto italiano: Arte, divismo e mercato* (Bari: Laterza, 1982), 131–143; and Paulo Antonio Pranaguà, "America Latina: appunti su una storia frammentaria," in *Storia del cinema mondiale*, ed. G. P. Brunetta, 2:170, and Giuliana Muscio, "Gilberto Rossi e la sua avventura cinematografica in Brasile," unpublished paper, Naples, November 22, 2004.

138. Another pioneer of Italian cinema, Federico Valle (1880–1960) from Asti, Piedmont, emigrated to Argentina in 1911 to set up his production company, producing newsreels, fiction films, documentaries and subtitling foreign films. In Brazil, Giuseppe Labanca created the first production company in 1905 and opened the first theaters; Paolo Benedetti made films in Brazil from 1909 onward. Gilberto Rossi produced also the newsreel "Rossi Actualitades" that ran from 1919 to 1930. Alberto Traversa was a true "bird of passage" who directed films in Italy and made *Bajo el sol de la pampa* (1916) and later codirected *En un dia de Gloria* (1918) with Mario Gallo and *En Buena Ley* (1919) in Argentina. Other Italians who contributed to Latin American silent cinema include actor/director Alberto Ballerini, and Antonio Serra, Raul Roulien, Luis Arata, Mario Soffici, Luis Sandrini, Nedda Francy, Francesco Marzullo, Jose and Arturo Carrari, Caetano Matanò, Vito Ciacchi, Amerigo Mazzoli, and Pedro Comello.

139. "The excellence of the cinematography, the documentary beauty of the rural landscapes and the surprising print toning made the film a success; it would be the first Brazilian feature-length film shown abroad." *Cinema Ritrovato*, exhibition catalog, Bologna 2011, 79.

140. Latin American cinema did not develop within national industries but often through individual, at times improvised initiatives. It was not at all unusual for the owner of a *fazenda* to finance the production of a film on his or her estate.

2. ARISTOCRATS, ACROBATS, LATIN LOVERS, AND WAITERS

1. Salvador Dali cited in Fausto Montesanti, "La parabola della diva" *Bianco e Nero* 13, nos.7–8 (July–August, 1952): 65.

2. For example, Lyda Borelli married Vittorio Cini of the famous Venetian family, Francesca Bertini count Paul Cartier, and Caterina Catardi became Rina De Liguoro by marrying count Wladimiro.

3. For an extensive bibliography, see note 7 in the introduction. In particular, see Caratozzollo, "Visibly Fashionable," in *Making Italian America: Consumer Culture and the Production of Ethnic Identities*, ed. Simone Cinotto (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 35–46.

4. These functions were only partially unified later within the hyperactive and yet safe sensuality of the flapper. See Giuliana Muscio, "Girls, Ladies, Stars," *Cinegrafie*, no. 13 (Ancona: Transeuropa, 2000), 9–70.

5. On the social distinction of Italian producers, see Giuliana Muscio, "In Hoc Signo Vinces: Historical Films," in *Italian Silent Cinema: A Reader*, ed. Giorgio Bertellini (New Barnet, UK: John Libbey, 2013), 153–160. On the history of Italian silent cinema, see also Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); and Frank Burke, ed., *A Companion to Italian Cinema* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2017).

6. George Kleine acquired the rights to *Quo Vadis*—nine reels long, when Griffith was still making two-reelers—for 150,000 dollars and presented it in the Astor Theatre on Broadway, with special tickets, priced 1 dollar and 50 cents, three times the price of an expensive film ticket. See Bernardini, *Cinema muto italiano, 1910–1914* (Bari: Laterza, 1982), 150. According to Bernardini, Italian film imports to the United States peaked between 1911 and 1914 (ibid., 144). On Kleine, see Giorgio Bertellini, "Italian Imageries, Historical Feature Films and the Fabrication of Italy's Spectators in Early 1900s New York," in *American Movie Audiences*, ed. Melvyn Stokes, Richard Maltby (London: BFI, 1999), 29–46.

7. Richard Abel, *Americanizing the Movies and "Movie-Mad" Audiences 1910–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 35

8. William Uricchio and Roberta Pearson, "Dante's Inferno and Caesar's Ghost: Intertextuality and Conditions of Reception in Early American Cinema," in *Silent Film*, ed. Richard Abel (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 217–233.

9. Anita Loos, titlist of *Intolerance*, recognized the impact of the literary intertitles of *Cabiria* on her own work in "Photoplay Writing," *Photoplay* (April 1918): 88–89, 121; see Giuliana Muscio, "Le didascalie di Anita Loos," in *Scrittura e immagine: Le didascalie nel cinema muto*, ed. Francesco Pitassio and Leonardo Quaresima (Udine: La Tipografica, 1998), 381–392.

10. Already in 1916, Umberto Paradisi discussed with great insight the penetration of American films on the Italian market in his article "Il pericolo azzurro: L'America in Italia e . . . viceversa," for the journal *La vita cinematografica* (September 7–15, 1916): "Work by Americans has met the widest appreciation everywhere. . . . I have found in their work a search for simplicity, logic, a fresh originality. . . . Americans have exceeded us." He concluded: "Welcome America in Italy, but also Italy should try to go to America." *Tra una film e l'altra. Materiali sul cinema muto italiano 1907–1920* (Venice: Marsilio, 1980), 300, my translation.

11. LUCE "was created to produce and distribute educational films . . . Thanks to LUCE, the Fascist regime was the first government in the world that exercised direct control over newsreels. Mussolini was the first head of government who could create, almost daily, a gigantic arc of triumph for his achievements. Starting in 1926, the screening of newsreels was mandatory in all Italian theaters." Gian Piero Brunetta, *History of Italian Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 62. On the role of Mussolini as media star, see Giorgio Bertellini, "Duce/Divo. Masculinity, Racial Identity, and Politics among Italian Americans in 1920s New York City," *Journal of Urban History* 31, no. 5 (July 2005): 685–726.

12. On Europeans in Hollywood, see Alastair Phillips and Ginette Vincendeau, eds., *Journeys of Desire: European Actors in Hollywood*. (London: BFI, 2006); Irène Bessière, ed., *Hollywood: Les fictions de l'exil* (Paris: Nouveau Monde editions, 2007); Irène Bessière and Roger Odin, eds., *Les Européens dans le cinema Américain, emigration et exil* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2004); Graham Petrie, *Hollywood Destinies: European Directors in America, 1922–1931* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985); John Baxter, *The Hollywood Exiles* (New York; Taplinger, 1976); and Giuliana Muscio, "European Actors in Classical Hollywood Cinema," in *The Place of Europe in American History*, ed. Maurizio Vaudagna (Turin: Otto, 2007), 65–90.

13. Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter, and Deniz Goturk, eds., *The German Cinema Book* (London: BFI, 2002); and Clive Hirshorn, *The Universal Story* (New York: Crown, 1983).

14. "Only a fraction of American theatres in the 1920s were movie palaces. The vast majority consisted of neighborhood theatres, aimed at working class patrons, including immigrant groups." Giorgio Bertellini, "Sovereign Consumption: Italian American Transnational Film Culture in 1920s New York City," in Cinotto, *Making Italian America*, 83–99, 86.

15. See Kristin Thompson, *America in the World Market 1907–1934* (London: BFI, 1985); David Ellwood and Rob Kroes, eds., *Hollywood in Europe, Experiences of a Cultural Hegemony* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994); Geoffrey Nowell Smith and Steven Ricci, eds., *Hollywood and Europe: Economics, Culture, National Identity 1945–1995* (London: BFI, 1998); Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby, eds., *Film Europe and Film America: Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange 1920–1939* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999); and Jens Ulff-Moller, *Hollywood's Film Wars with France: Film-Trade Diplomacy* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2001).

16. See Abel, *Americanizing the Movies.*

17. On Fascism and the media, see Piero Garofalo and Jacqueline Reich, eds., *Re-viewing Fascism: Italian Cinema 1922–1943* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); Steven Ricci, *Cinema and Fascism. Italian Film and Society, 1922–1943* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); David Forgacs, *Rethinking Italian Fascism: Capitalism, Populism, Culture* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986); and James Hay, *Fascist Italy: The Passing of the Rex* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

18. On Albertini, see Mario Quargnolo, *Luciano Albertini: Un divo degli anni 'venti* (Udine: CSU editrice, 1976).

19. Jacqueline Reich, *The Maciste Films of Italian Silent Cinema*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

20. Alberto Farassino, *Gli uomini forti*, exhibiton catalog, Trieste, February 6–8, 1984, 4, my translation. See also, Vittorio Martinelli and Mario Quargnolo, *Macise & Co: I giganti buoni del muto italiano* (Gemona: Edizioni Cinepopolare, 1981); and Monica Dall'Asta, *Trame spezzate. Archeologia del film seriale* (Genova: Le Mani, 2009).

21. As confirmed by the viewing of the restored German films *Der Unüberwindliche* and *Mister Radio* at *Giornate del Cinema Muto* 2015 in Pordenone.

22. Cited in a Latin American source, Eliana Jara Donoso, "Eugenio De Liguoro" in *Diccionario del Cine Iberoamericano* (SGAE, 2011); this film is never mentioned in Italian and American filmographies.

23. "A great supporter of national cinema in the 1940s, his specialty was a kind of simple comedy, realized with diligence and above all with a particular attention for photography. He improvised everything: the script, the shots, the focus, all dominated by a 'great knowledge of audience tastes,' according to the general opinion of the critics of the time. . . . In 1937–1938 the couple reached the harbor of Valparaíso. De Liguoro claimed he had fallen in love with the place, the landscape and its inhabitants; he found there a fairly large Italian colony, and he stated with euphoria, typical of a Neapolitan, that he was available to 'offer to Chile the primacy in Latin

American cinema.' He did not succeed, but he contributed to the resurrection of a still depressed cinema" (ibid., my translation).

24. This is an oft-repeated anecdote, certified by film historian Vittorio Martinelli.

25. The surname Negri was inspired by the name of an Italian female poet. Vittorio Martinelli, *Le dive del silenzio* (Genova: Le Mani, 2001), 198.

26. Sergio Leone interview in Diego Gabutti, *C'era una volta in America* (Milan: Rizzoli 1984) cited in "Hollywood 1928: The Changeling, Clint Eastwood, Sergio Leone e Lido Manetti" in the magazine on line *Sempreinpenombra*, February 26, 2009.

27. See Giuliana Muscio, "Guido Trento: from the 'Neapolitan synecdoche' to *Italian* American-ness," in *Re-Mapping Italian America. Places, Cultures, Identity*, ed. Anthony Tamburri, Carla Francellini, and Sabrina Vellucci (New York: Bordighera Press, forthcoming).

28. Lawrence Estavan, *The Italian Theatre in San Francisco* (San Bernardino: Borgo Press, 1991), 68–69.

29. With the sole exceptions of Carminati, who played detective Moletti and prince Dantarini, and Trento's role as the *carabiniere* in *Street Angel*.

30. "In France in the *annus horribilis* 1925, American releases outnumbered French-produced motion pictures 577 to 68." Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through 20th Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005), 305.

31. "We saw him in a great number of films, like *Monte Carlo*, *As you Desire Me* (he is one of Greta's suitors at the beginning of the film), *The Woman from Moscow* with Pola Negri, *The Crusaders*, *Here's to Romance*, and *Diamond Jim*." Gianni Puccini, "Italiani nel mondo del cinema," *Cinema*, no. 20, April 25, 1937, 330.

32. *New York World-Telegram*, July 18, 1933, Albert Conti clipping files, AMPAS.

33. In 1919, "he moved to Philadelphia and worked as a clerk in a ship chandler's, took a whirl at banking in the foreign exchange depart of a Pittsburgh bank, tried working in the old fields of Texas, returned to Chicago as a bank clerk, drifted to the Orange County oil fields and tried to sell stocks and bonds in Los Angeles and was just settling down to the collecting and distributing end of the laundry business in the movie colony when he happened to see a want." From a Paramount biography, Albert Conti clipping file, AMPAS.

34. Peter Bogdanovich, *John Ford* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 41–43.

35. Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By . . .* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936), 36.

36. Bill Cappello, "The Search for Gino Corrado," www.billcappello.com.

37. Hunter Lovelace, "Opinions on Pictures," *Motion Picture News*, September 14, 1929, 896. Another source reported: "Gino Corrado, versatile Italian actor, is winning praise for his interpretation of what director Irving Cummings calls 'the sympathetic heavy' in Colleen Moore's newest vehicle, 'The Desert Flower.'" "Hollywood Notes," *Exhibitor's Trade Review*, June 13, 1925, 36.

38. Alberto Anile, *Orson Welles in Italy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 87.

39. From the *Boston Globe*, undated clipping, Armetta clipping file, AMPAS.

40. Helen Ludlum—in "The Gloom-Chaser," *Modern Screen* (September 1936)—reported: "J. Gordon Edwards, director in chief for Fox, went to Italy to make *The Shepherd King* and took Henry along as an interpreter." Armetta clipping file, AMPAS.

41. Frank Nugent, "Notes on a Minor Comic," *New York Times* undated. Armetta clipping file, Rose NY.

42. In addition to an enormous, if uneven, bibliography, and the key text by Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), recent research on Valentino include Silvio Alovisio and Giulia Carluccio, eds., *Rodolfo Valentino: Cinema, cultura, società tra Italia e Stati Uniti negli anni Venti* (Turin: Kaplan, 2010) and Paola Cristalli, ed., *Valentino: Lo schermo della passione* (Bologna: Cinegrafie, 1996), which includes a detailed filmography. See also

Amy Lawrence, "Rudolph Valentino: Italian American" in *Idols of Modernity*, ed. Patrice Petro (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 87–107.

43. From an unpublished interview with Alberto Guglielmi by Kevin Brownlow. Courtesy of Kevin Brownlow.

44. Cristalli, *Valentino*, 135.

45. In his interview with Brownlow, Albert Valentino stated that they came from a middle-class family, never claiming aristocratic origins.

46. Koszarski reported a billing as "Rodolfo Di Valentina Playing a New Style Heavy." Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 299.

47. On personality, see Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1973), and Richard Dyer, *Star* (London: BFI, 1979).

48. On the relationship between Mathis and Valentino, see Giuliana Muscio, *Rudy e June*, in Cristalli, *Valentino*, 47–58, and Thomas J. Slater, *June Mathis: A Woman Who Spoke Through Silents*, in *American Silent Film: Discovering Marginalized Voices*, ed. Gregg Bachman and Thomas Slater (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 201–216.

49. See Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), and Petro, *Idols of Modernity*.

50. Julio's heroic deeds in war are narrated in the cemetery, not shown on film.

51. Giuliana Muscio, "Garbo and Her Writers," in *Silent Garbo-Cinegrafie*, no. 10 (Ancona: Transeuropa, 1997), 241–248.

52. Giuliana Muscio, "American Women Screenwriters in the 1920s," in *Doing Women's Film History*, ed. Christine Gledhill and Julia Knight (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 193–205.

53. Valentino replied, "People are not savages because they have dark skins. The Arabian civilization is one of the oldest in the world . . . the Arabs are dignified and keen-brained." Emily W. Leider, *Dark Lover: The Life and Death of Rudolph Valentino* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2003), 172.

54. See Lawrence, "Rudolph Valentino: Italian American," in the section "Labor Issues: An Actor Protests," 100–102.

55. Diane Negra, "The Fictionalized Ethnic Biography: Nita Naldi and the Crisis of Assimilation," in Bachman and Slater, *American Silent Film*, 176–201, 176. The essay contains an in-depth discussion of ethnic issues. See also Gaylyn Studlar, "Discourses of Gender and Ethnicity: The Construction and De(con)struction of Rudolph Valentino as Other" *Film Criticism* 13, no. 2 (1989): 18–36.

56. See his diary "My Trip Abroad" in *Pictures and Picturegoer* published as a series of articles between November 1924 and August 1925.

57. On a reading of *The Son of the Sheik* in terms of performance style, see Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 401–410. "The moral authority granted Valentino by the story is reinforced by codes of greater authenticity at the level of performance" (407).

58. "Pink Powder Puff," *Chicago Tribune*, July 18, 1926, reprinted in Kenneth Anger, *Hollywood Babilonia* (Milan: Adelphi, 1979), 108.

59. Giorgio Bertellini, "The Atlantic Valentino: The 'Inimitable Lover' as Racialized and Gendered Italian," in *Intimacy and Italian Migration*, ed. Loretta Baldassar and Donna Gabaccia (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 45.

60. Amy Lawrence, "Rodolfo Valentino: un italoamericano negli anni Venti," in Alovisio and Carluccio, *Rodolfo Valentino*, 230–239, 235.

61. See Jacqueline Reich, “Rodolfo Valentino ‘uomo forte,’” in Alovisio and Carluccio, *Rodolfo Valentino*, 308–322.

62. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Anchor, 1988).

63. See, for example, the reviews on the *New York Times*, November 24, 1924, and on *La vita cinematografica*, Turin, no. 3, 1927. See also Cristina Jandelli, “Lo stile di recitazione di Rodolfo Valentino,” in Alovisio and Carluccio, *Rodolfo Valentino*, 339–355.

64. William Uricchio, “L’Italia Americana, l’America di Valentino,” in *Valentino*, ed. Paola Cristalli (Ancona: Cinegrafie, 1996), 96.

65. Bertellini, “Duce/Divo,” 688.

66. Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 205. Stephen Gundle, *Film Stars and Society in Fascist Italy*, in Garofalo and Reich, *Re-viewing Fascism*, 317–339.

67. Bertellini, “Duce/Divo,” 712.

68. Press item, dated January 7, 1926, generously presented to the author by researcher Jens Ulff-Moller.

Gianni Puccini, “Italiani nel mondo del cinema,” *Cinema*, no. 20, April 25, 1937, 330.

69. “Una lettera di Rodolfo Valentino, attore italianissimo,” in Silvio Alovisio and Giulia Carluccio, eds., *Intorno a Rodolfo Valentino: Materiali Italiani 1923–1933* (Turin: Kaplan, 2009), 108–109, my translation.

70. Leider, *Dark Lover*, 373. John Dos Passos wrote the effective piece *Adagio Dancer* on Valentino’s funeral, included in the novel *The Big Money* (1936).

71. Nancy Carnevale discusses the trial, in particular the issue of interpreters and translation in her *A New Language, a New World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 86–96.

3. A FILMIC GRAND TOUR: AMERICAN SILENT FILMS “MADE IN ITALY”

1. Francis S.Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Modern Classics, 1948) 244.

2. The meeting is documented by Arnold Gillespie in “Remembrances of *Ben Hur*, Part II,” *Classic Images*, no. 162 (December 1988): 25–26. In the novel *Tender Is the Night*, Dick (Fitzgerald alter ego) is in Rome to see Rosemary, who is working in an American film titled *The Grandeur That Was Rome*—a costume picture which recalls *Ben Hur*: “They went out through the Porta San Sebastiano and along the Appian way until they came to the huge set of the forum, larger than the forum itself. Rosemary turned him over to a man who led him about the great props: the arches and tiers of seats and the sanded arena,” writes Fitzgerald. “She was working on a stage which represented a guard-room for Christian prisoners, and presently they went there and watched Nicotera, one of the many hopeful Valentinos, strut and pose before a dozen female ‘captives,’ their eyes melancholy and startling with mascara” (Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night*, 232). In *Tender Is the Night*, the writer expressed his (negative) sentiments toward Italians *before* the fist fight, when, getting drunk in a bar, “Dick, worn away by the events of the afternoon, was taking it out on the inhabitants of Italy. He looked around in the bar as if he hoped an Italian had heard him and would resent his words. . . . Rome was the end of his dream of Rosemary” (240–241).

3. Joseph P. Cosco, *Imagining Italians: The Clash of Romance and Race in American Perceptions, 1880/1910* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 5. “Americans saw Italy not simply as a place, . . . but as an aesthetic, cultural, and moral construct” (ibid., 4).

4. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 284.

5. As an examination of the paintings by American painters in Italy confirms. See Theodore E. Stebbins Jr., *The Lure of Italy: American Artists and the Italian Experience, 1760–1914* (New York: Harry Abrams, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1992).

6. Van Wyck Brooks, *The Dream of Arcadia: American Writers and Artists in Italy, 1760–1915* (New York: Dutton, 1958), 51.

7. "The Italian people were seen as dishonest, mendacious, immoral, lazy, dirty, degraded, sensual, theatrical, and childlike" (Cosco, *Imagining Italians*, 7).

8. "By observing, and usually disparaging, the contemporary Italian national character, Americans could analyze and promote their own national character" (Cosco, *Imagining Italians*, 8).

9. John Paul Russo, "From Italophilia to Italophobia: Representations of Italian Americans in the Early Gilded Age," *Differentia*, nos. 6–7 (Spring/Autumn 1994): 45–46.

10. Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through 20th Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005), 4.

11. Ibid., 2.

12. "America's golden age of travel writing lasted from 1880 to 1914, and for many Americans the richest treasure of all was Italy" (Cosco, *Imagining Italians*, 8).

13. See Giuliana Muscio, "Il Grand Tour cinematografico: produzioni americane in Italia negli anni Venti," in *A nuova luce: Cinema muto italiano*, vol. 1, ed. Michele Canosa (Bologna: Cleub, 2000), 89–102. For historical accounts of some productions, see Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By . . .* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936) and Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Brownlow has also kindly made his precious collections available to the author.

14. See de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 284–335, and Giorgio Bertellini, "Sovereign Consumption: Italian American Transnational Film Culture in 1920s New York City," in *Making Italian America*, ed. Simone Cinotto (New York: Fordham University Press), 83–99, 87.

15. Among the many titles on the advent of Italian Fascism, see Stanislao G. Pugliese, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism, and the Resistance in Italy: 1919 to the present* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004); and Giulia Albanese, *La Marcia su Roma* (Rome: Laterza, 2006).

16. Robert Sklar, ed., *The Plastic Age, 1917–1930* (New York: Braziller, 1970); Roderick Nash, *The Nervous Generation* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1990); and Lynn Dumenil, *Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

17. Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 28.

18. "Living with Zelda in a cheap hotel in Piazza di Spagna, the writer was revising *The Great Gatsby*, dilapidating the money he had earned with his stories. After a fist fight with a taxi driver and a passer-by who happened to be a policeman, he was in jail unable to sleep: 'I used to imagine whole auditoriums filled with the cream of Italy, and me with a machine gun concealed on the stage. All ready. Curtain up. Tap-tap-tap-tap.' He had been on the set of *Ben Hur*, and the Fitzgeralds were really impressed by the fake amphitheatre, 'larger and nobler than the original ones.'" Daria Galateria, "Vite parallele," *Venerdi di Repubblica*, October 24, 2014, 174, my translation. The writer had become so violently anti-Italian that he wrote to a friend: "I hate Italy and the Italiens [*sic*] so violently that I can't bring myself to write about them." Caterina Ricciardi, "Francis Scott Fitzgerald and Rome," *RSA Journal*, no. 10 (1999): 29–46.

19. About *The Love Light*, see Giuliana Muscio, "*The Love Light*: cinema americano e donne sul fronte italiano nel primo conflitto mondiale," in *Narrazione e immagini delle donne in guerra (1914–1918)*, ed. Giulia Albanese, Alessandro Faccioli, and Carlotta Sorba (Turin: Kaplan, 2016), 33–40. See also Cari Beauchamp, *Without Lying Down: Frances Marion and the Powerful Women of Early Hollywood* (New York: Lisa Drew Book/Scribner, 1997), 123. About Fairbanks and Pickford in Italy, see Bertellini, "Sovereign Consumption," 94.

20. *Morning Telegraph*, July 13, 1924. Bergère clipping file, AMPAS.

21. Anita Loos in an article in the *Herald Tribune*, cited in Gary Carey, *Anita Loos: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1988), 119.

22. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1890–1925* (New Brunswick, NY: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 181–182.

23. Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Stein and Day, 1975), 127.

24. "Famous Players Directors Return from Europe," *Motion Picture News*, July 25, 1914, 30.

25. "Dodging Government Red Tape in 'The Eternal City,'" *Morning Telegraph*, April 11, 1915. Unless otherwise stated, most of the information on this production comes from the film's promotional eight-page spread available at AMPAS in *The Eternal City* (1914) file. Kevin Brownlow too preserved a lavish and amply illustrated oversized press book with a novelization of the film (Kevin Brownlow Collection).

26. "Dodging Government Red Tape": "As a matter of fact, the Italian authorities were even kinder than they knew. They gave leave for the performance of certain things, and when the legal permission didn't cover the situation the enthusiastic American developers of screen drama stretched it out to suit conditions. There was some gorgeous bluffing and prevaricating indulged in with golden results."

27. "Putting 'The Eternal City' Into Movies in Rome Was Difficult" *New York Herald*, April 18, 1915. The article "'The Eternal City' in Picture Form Ready For the Stage" in *Evening World* (April 6, 1915) reads: "Whereas in this country it is a comparatively simple matter to secure permits to take motion pictures in public spaces, while private property may be readily rented for the purpose, in Rome there are not only two governments to be dealt with—The Quirinale and the Vatican—but there are many traditions and popular superstitions to be respected" (*The Eternal City* file, AMPAS).

28. "Famous Players Directors Return from Europe," *Motion Picture News*, July 25, 1914. *The Eternal City* (1914) file, AMPAS.

29. "There was also a great deal of political disturbance in Rome that year, with mass meetings in the Coliseum and strikers marching between walls of armed soldiers down Roman avenues. Director Hugh Ford got his co-director and cameraman, Edwin S. Porter, to utilize all of this on film, and the mob scenes figured importantly on screen." DeWitt Bodeen, "Pauline Frederick," *Films in Review* (February 1965): 71.

30. "Dodging Government Red Tape" *Morning Telegraph*, April 11, 1915, *The Eternal City* (1914) file, AMPAS.

31. *Evening World*, April 8, 1915. *The Eternal City* (1914) file, AMPAS.

32. Adolph Zukor, with Dale Kramer, *The Public Is Never Wrong: The Autobiography of Adolph Zukor* (New York: Puntam's Sons, 1953), 128.

33. According to *Film Daily Yearbook 1916*, the film was indeed banned in Quebec in October 1915, "as a story that might offend the Catholics," 58 (Kevin Brownlow Collection).

34. "On the evening of May 5th, 1915, . . . Zukor offers a sumptuous and highly publicized lunch in honor of Edwin S. Porter on his 45th birthday. Upon his entrance in the dining room of the Knickerbloker hotel, Porter was welcomed by the strains of Garibaldi's anthem, which had been an important component of the musical score for *Eternal City*." Davide Turconi, *Sulla via di Hollywood* (Pordenone: Giornate del Cinema Muto, 1988), 54–56, my translation.

35. Terry Ramsaye, *A Million and One Nights* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1964), 640–641, 710. See also Michael J. Quinn, "Paramount and Early Feature Distribution," *Film History* 11, no. 1, 199, 103. The picture was re-released in December 1918 in five reels as part of Paramount's Success Series, according to the *AFI Catalog* and to Quinn's essay.

36. Arthur C. Miller notes: "For Edwin S. Porter sticking to one phase of moving pictures was impossible. His inventive urge finally took him out of the production end of motion pictures and brought him into the business of manufacturing Simplex motion picture projectors." Fred Bashofer, and Arthur C. Miller, *One Reel a Week* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 162–163. Anthony Slide writes: "Porter later joined Adolph Zukor and helped to form Famous

Players, acting as production manager for the new company. . . . *The Eternal City* . . . was Porter's last film." Antony Slide, *Early American Cinema* (Barnes: New York, 1970), 14.

37. "Hall Caine's 'The Eternal City' Proves Great Film Spectacle," *Evening Journal*, April 17, 1915, from the promotional material of *The Eternal City*, 1914, AMPAS.

38. "Hall Caine as Socialist. 'The Eternal City' Prophetic of the present conditions," *Call* (New York City), April 11, 1915. Actually, Hall Caine had been Rossetti's secretary in his youth; the reference to Giolitti is inappropriate, however, because the political personality Caine had in mind was Francesco Saverio Nitti, who had written a book he was familiar with, *Catholic Socialism*.

39. "Rome, the Inspiration of the World's Artists and Poets Finds a New Immortality in the 'Eternal City' Film Play," in *New York American*, April 18, 1915, AMPAS.

40. *The Bioscope*, September 16, 1915, 293 (Kevin Brownlow Collection). "But it was the enthralling beauty of the Italian scenery which held the spectators spellbound from first to last. The harmonious blending of colors gained in the lighting effects, particularly those scenes taken in front of the ruins of the Coliseum, in and around St. Peter's, and the varied bird's eye views of the city, set a standard for this species of work which it is doubtful has yet been equalled . . . to date." "Viola Allen Sees 'Eternal City,'" *Morning Telegraph*, April 13, 1915, AMPAS.

41. Anti-Americanism, already traceable in French Enlightenment philosophers, predated the rise of the United States as a world power. See also Paul Hollander, ed., *Anti-Americanism: Its Origins and Impact at Home and Abroad* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004); Jean-Francois Revel, *L'Obsession antiaméricaine* (Paris: Plon, 2002); Philippe Roger, *L'Ennemi américaine* (Paris: Seuil, 2002); Sergio Romano, *Il rischio americano* (Milan: Longanesi, 2003); and Andrew Ross and Kristin Ross, *Anti-Americanism* (New York: New York University Press, 2004).

42. See Jack Lodge, "The Career of Herbert Brenon," *Griffithiana*, nos. 57/58 (1996): 4–120; Lodge's article constitutes the main source of information in this segment. See also Riccardo Redi, "Brenon in Italia," in ibid., 134–142, and the Brenon clipping files at MOMA.

43. The Salvini genealogy is hard to unravel because there is another actor called Alexander Salvini (1861–1896), Tommaso's third son, who spoke fluent English and became a Broadway star but died in Italy of typhoid fever contracted in the United States. Sandro Salvini (1889–1955) was the son of Gustavo Salvini, Tommaso's first son. In Italy, Sandro had acted in several films with Lyda Borelli and Francesca Bertini, but he was then working on the British stage. See Redi, "Brenon in Italia," 134.

44. Doro was an American actress by the name of Marie Katherine Steward—another Italianized name which confuses scholars, especially as she also worked in Italy.

45. Lodge, "Herbert Brenon," 47, Redi, "Brenon in Italia," 135.

46. Kristin Thompson, *America in the World Market 1907–1934* (London: BFI, 1985); David Ellwood and Rob Kroes, eds., *Hollywood in Europe, Experiences of a Cultural Hegemony* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994); Geoffrey Nowell Smith and Steven Ricci, eds., *Hollywood and Europe: Economics, Culture, National Identity 1945–1995* (London: BFI, 1998); Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby, eds., *Film Europe and Film America: Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange 1920–1939* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999); and Jens Ulff-Moller, *Hollywood's Film Wars with France: Film-Trade Diplomacy* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2001).

47. Lodge, "Herbert Brenon," 47.

48. "It was a Ruritanian melodrama, with Marie Doro as Princess Marietta of the imaginary country of Turania, whose parents are assassinated by republican rebels. A sympathetic Prime Minister hides her on a distant island [Capri]. The rebels discover her, she tries to escape, and is rescued from drowning by a young writer [who] takes her to Venice, and, dressed as a boy, she poses as his servant" (ibid.).

49. See Giuliana Muscio, "Venezia vista da Hollywood," in *L'immagine di Venezia nel cinema del Novecento*, ed. Gian Piero Brunetta and Alessandro Faccioli (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2003), 109–118.

50. Vittorio Martinelli, *Cinema muto italiano 1920* (Rome: Bianco e Nero, 1980), 275–277, my translation.

51. Redi, "Brenon in Italia," 137–139.

52. Lodge, "Herbert Brenon," 49.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid. "The film was melodramatic and theatrical—writes Lodge, Brenon's biographer—but was enriched by the stupendous beauty of the Sicilian settings, here seen with exceptional effects of light and shadow, carried out with great technical skill."

55. Ibid.

56. Redi, "Brenon in Italia," 141.

57. Penciled clipping, July 1920, Brenon clipping file, MOMA.

58. Penciled clipping, 1920, Brenon clipping file, MOMA.

59. Undated clipping, Brenon clipping file AMPAS.

60. Vittorio Martinelli, "Sant'Ilario," in *Il cinema muto italiano: I film degli anni Venti/1923–1931* (Rome: Bianco e Nero, 1984), 109.

61. Darclea played Helen in *Der Untergang Trojas* by Manfred Noa (1924).

62. Martinelli, *Il cinema muto italiano*, 109. Fernando was the elder brother of Dino and Nelo Risi who became two important Italian filmmakers in the post–World War II period. See also Brownlow, *Parade's Gone By*, 514. In *The Film Daily Year Book, 1922–23*, 151, Ernest Shipman announced the distribution of "*Latin Love*, based on F. Marion Crawford's immortal classic, 'Sant'Ilario'—the drama of the Saracinesca—with Alexander Salvini, directed by Henry Kolker and photographed by Charkes Rosher," together with *The Man from Glengarry*, *The Good-Fer-Nothin'*, *The Rapids*, and *Blue Water*, but there is no sign of *Latin Love* in American sources.

63. In the same letter, Shipman also thanked Mary Pickford for "permitting this undertaking to benefit from the unsurpassed photography of her cinematographer, Charles Rosher." See also Charles Rosher, "An Analysis of the Film Industry in Italy—Lack of Unity and Organization Hampers Italian Efforts," *American Cinematographer* (September 1922): 7, 8, 24. (Rosher's material was most kindly made available to me by Kevin Brownlow). Actually, an item in *Film Daily* March 31, 1921, reported that Shipman was leaving New York, stating that "he is going to London, Paris, and Turin, the capital [of Italian cinema] . . . Shipman has been called in to advise on the best method of marketing foreign productions in the US." The plan must have changed shortly after his arrival in Italy.

64. On Stame, see Riccardo Redi, *Cinema muto italiano (1896–1930)* (Rome: Bianco and Nero, 1999), 160, 163–164.

65. Rosher, "An Analysis of the Film Industry in Italy."

66. Luporini ran Artisti Associati until 1938, when Mussolini blocked the import of American films and Luporini was "expelled" from Artisti Associati as an anti-Fascist. Tino Balio, *United Artists, 1919–1950: The Company Built by the Stars* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 1:167–168; and David Forgacs and Stephen Gundle, *Mass Culture and Italian Society from Fascism to Cold War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 150.

67. Rosher's analysis partially corresponds to Brunetta's interpretation of the crisis of Italian cinema in the 1920s, which was caused by disorganization, unpredictability, increasing costs because of the demands of divas, the loss of foreign markets, inability to compete with foreign production, and lack of generational renewal. Brunetta, *History of Italian Cinema*, 58.

68. "It was 1913 [*sic*] when the great Italian spectacle, 'Cabiria,' played at the Casino Theatre," recalled Edwards's son. "William Fox took all his close associates to a screening, and I was privileged to accompany Dad [J. Gordon Edwards] and Angie [Angela McCaull]. The magnitude and the style of the picture so impressed Mr. Fox he made up his mind then and there to go all out for the production of motion pictures. He sent my father and Angie to Europe to sign up artists and directors of note, but World War I broke out and they returned home on the first

available ship, their port-holes blacked out." I thank Kevin Brownlow for giving me access to this memo dated February 24, 1972, from John Gordon McEdwards Jr. on his father's career.

69. Armetta's presence on the set has not been proved beyond all doubt, but it corresponds to a pattern: like Salvini with Brenon and Puglia with King, these filmmakers needed an interpreter, possibly somebody who knew the Hollywood production methods. From J. Gordon Edwards's Memo (Kevin Brownlow Collection).

70. Herbert Howe, "When in Rome Do as the Caesars did," *Photoplay* (August 1922): 75–76, 120. In the February issue of *Photoplay* 1923, the same Howe wrote: "The most applauded men in the current world are Valentino and Mussolini. In Rome we witnessed the Fascist revolution and cheered for Mussolini and Vittorio Emanuele. In London we witnessed *Blood and Sand* and cheered for Valentino." Giorgio Bertellini, "Duce/Divo: Masculinity, Racial Identity, and Politics among Italian Americans in 1920s New York City," *Journal of Urban History* 31, no. 5 (July 2005): 685–726, 685.

71. Vittorio Martinelli informed me that *Nero* had also utilized some leftover footage from *Messalina* (Enrico Guazzoni, 1923). This was an exchange in which both recognized the quality of Italian historical films and confirmed a sort of design to (con)fuse the national origins of these pictures, in order to strengthen their value on the controlled markets.

72. "*Nero*—All Star European cast," *Harrison Report*, June 3, 1922, 86.

73. Brownlow, *Parade's Gone By*, 384.

74. Bertellini, "Sovereign Consumption," 93.

75. Despite her name, Ouida was American, born Eunie Branch, but she had traveled in Europe extensively as a girl. On Bergère, see Giuliana Muscio, "Clara, Ouida, Beulah, et al.: Women Screenwriters in American Silent Cinema," in *Reclaiming the Archive: Feminism and Film History*, ed. Vicki Callahan (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 289–308. George Fitzmaurice, born in France, emigrated to the United Kingdom as a painter before transferring to the United States, where he started working in the movies for George Kleine.

76. Bashofer and Miller, *One Reel a Week*, 162–163.

77. *The Man from Home* in *American Film Institute Catalog. Feature Films 1921–1930* (New York and London: R.R. Bowker, 1971), 479.

78. Miller's account demonstrates that the crew were well aware of Fascism: "One afternoon while we were working on a rather wide thoroughfare, we heard the sound of an approaching band. . . . The men in the parade wore hats resembling Turkish fezzes, with a white skull and crossbones on the front. They had blue-grey riding breeches that flared out at the pockets, black, shiny shoes, and almost knee-high, highly polished black puttees. The sight was impressive and hard to forget. As the parade continued, our Italian property man kept repeating, 'Il Duce, il Duce,' almost in a state of hypnosis. The line of black-shirted marchers occasionally stopped and, on command, gave a slightly upward straight-arm salute, as they loudly roared 'il Duce.' That night in our hotel lobby there was much talk about what had taken place that day. The parade was Mussolini's entrance into Rome. . . . That night trucks loaded with these black-shirted men roamed the streets singing Mussolini song 'Giovinezza.' We were warned that if a truck loaded with the black-shirted men went by to be sure to give the Fascist salute as the natives did or rocks might be sent our way from the trucks. . . . The attendant uncertainty of this situation caused us to rearrange our schedule so that we could leave Rome as far as possible" (Bashofer and Miller, *One Reel a Week*,163).

79. Given that Fitzmaurice was also a producer, the decisions were probably his, not a commitment from an American film company. Articles reporting on Fitzmaurice's European trip indicated that he was going to make the movie in England.

80. Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood, 1918–1939* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 50.

81. I presented a program on Fitzmaurice's *The Eternal City* and a collegium class at Giornate del Cinema Muto, in Pordenone, on October 8, 2014.

82. Brownlow, *Behind the Mask*, 457.

83. Vasey, *World According to Hollywood*, 50.

84. Brownlow, *Behind the Mask*, 457.

85. Ibid., 457.

86. Bashofer and Miller, *One Reel a Week*, 165–166.

87. Ibid., 166.

88. Ibid.

89. Brownlow, *Behind the Mask*, 459.

90. Bashofer and Miller, *One Reel a Week*, 166.

91. Bergère stated: "I suggested that Emerson should title the film for me. And he did. I just did story with rough titling in the script. . . . The things they did on *Belladonna* were quite appalling. I was ashamed to have my name on it. That's when I decided that I would get out of the business."

92. The clipping continues: "About two years ago the Goldwyn company imported 'Theodora,' screen version of the Sardou melodrama, made in Italy. The Astor New York played it for a few weeks but when the production, one of undeniable beauty and force, got into the other big cities of the country, it drew the Italian population and then blew up." *Eternal City* clipping, courtesy of Kevin Brownlow.

93. "The best part of 'The Eternal City' is its love story; the silliest parts relate the fights between the Fascisti and the Reds. In fact, some of the timely improvements on Hall Caine are just about as foolish as the original masterpiece." Agnes Smith, "The Screen in Review," *Picture Play Magazine* (February 1924), 55.

94. Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (New York: Macmillan, 1915).

95. It is actually quite a statement of cultural imperialism. See Vasey, *World According to Hollywood*, 49.

96. Ibid.

97. On relations between Hollywood and Fascism, see also Giuliana Muscio, *Hollywood's New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), and Bertellini, "Duce/Divo."

98. Brownlow, *Parade's Gone By*, 458.

99. After a consultation with the "papal delegate to Washington," King secured the assistance of the "head ceremonial director from the Vatican, . . [who had] a lot of experience. The last show he put on had sixteen thousand people in the cast. . . . The hunt scene was staged by a local master of the hounds. Instead of hiring extra people, I just took the principals and used the social set of Rome as extras" (Brownlow, *Parade's Gone By*, 109–110).

100. Ibid., 110.

101. According to this program, preserved at MOMA, the premiere took place on September 5, 1923, at the 44th St. Theatre, in New York City. See Giuliana Muscio, "Un Grand Tour Made in Hollywood: la promozione di *The White Sister*," in *Il racconto del film*, ed. Alice Autelitano and Valentina Re (Udine: Forum ed., 2006), 325–336.

102. On the picturesque, see John Dickie, *Darkest Italy* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1999), 83–119, and Giorgio Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

103. Scholar Christine Leteux provided the information to me in an e-mail, on December 11, 2014.

104. See "L'Europe finit à Naples," in Nelson J. Moe, *The View from the Vesuvius* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 37–84.

105. Gianni Isola, "Alle origini del cinema italiano: l'effimera avventura di Gianni Faraglia, mancato produttore fiorentino," in *Archivio Trentino*, no. 2 (1998): 219–226, 224.

106. Brownlow, *Parade's Gone By*, 112.

107. Promotional material, AMPAS.

108. "The Making of *Romola*," *Romola* file, AMPAS.

109. Lillian Gish, comment for *Motion Picture Magazine*, October 1924 (Kevin Brownlow Collection).

110. Isola, "Alle origini del cinema italiano," 219–226. According to the historian, Gabriellino D'Annunzio, son of the poet, was a consultant on the film too.

111. "Striking examples of this assistance were permission to use, as backgrounds for scenes, the famous Bargello Museum in Florence and the Cathedral and Leaning Tower of Pisa. On other occasions, uniformed guards were loaned by various cities when scenes were being made and it was necessary to hold the throngs of visitors in check to prevent them from coming within range of the cameras." Romola promotional material, AMPAS.

112. "The theatrical rights to the story were obtained from General Wallace in 1899 by the powerful producing firm of Klaw & Erlanger, which staged the dramatization sumptuously with numerous scenes, great mobs of extras, singing choruses and a chariot race with real horses on a treadmill in the center of the stage." Bosley Crowther, *The Lion's Share* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1957), 92.

113. "She insisted, but that it be produced in Italy, the only place where the spirit and the atmosphere of the Roman Empire could be obtained" (ibid., 93). Crowther dedicates an entire chapter to "the Saga of Ben Hur" (ibid., 91–100). Brownlow narrates "the making of" *Ben Hur* in *Parade's Gone By*, entitling the section "Heroic Fiasco," 386–414. For the Italian versions of the "making of *Ben Hur*," see Mario Quargnolo and Riccardo Redi, "The 'Heroic Fiasko': il *Ben Hur* del 1925" *Immagine*, no. 30 (Spring 1995): 1–7; and "*Ben Hur* a Roma nel 1924," *Immagine*, no. 33 (Winter 1995–1996): 1–8.

114. Crowther, *Lion's Share*, 94.

115. Ibid.

116. At the time, Niblo claimed Italian origins and that his name was Federico Nobili; actually, his name was Fred Liedtke and his family was German/French.

117. "Ivan St. Johns, "Fifty-Fifty: June Mathis Meets the Perfect Collaborator—and Marries Him," *Photoplay* (October 1926), 123–124. The American filmography of Balboni also included several films not written by Mathis.

118. Quargnolo and Redi, "*Ben Hur* a Roma nel 1924," 1–3.

119. Quargnolo and Redi "The 'Heroic Fiasko,'" 2.

120. Gillespie was assistant to art director Horace Jackson from the December 1923 to March 1925 and narrated the making of *Ben Hur* in "Remembrances from *Ben Hur*," *Classic Images*, no. 61, 56–58; no. 161, 38–40; and no. 162, 24–26 (*Ben Hur* file, AMPAS).

121. "That was the beginning of one of the most rewarding relationships of my entire life," comments Gillespie, who writes that he and Neri supervised the feverish activity "sleeping on straw ticks on a cold concrete floor" (ibid., 40). As an art director at MGM, Gillespie met the Italian again in the 1960s.

122. Mastrocinque would soon become a film director in Italy, making the interaction between Italians and Americans on the set more intense than usually depicted. See Brownlow, *Parade's Gone By*, 396.

123. Ben Hur's galley was anchored against the wind, so as not to facilitate the spread of fire; a red flag would alert the rescuers after the scene was shot. But for some mysterious reason the flag was not waved. Dressed as a pirate, Gillespie stayed on board to coordinate the movements of the extras while the ship was sinking, but the fresh wood used in its construction made the galley burn with unexpected rapidity. Worried about possible disastrous developments, "faithful Tito," hidden on the ship, rescued his American "son," Gillespie.

124. Brownlow, *Parade's Gone By*, 404.

125. *Ben Hur* publicity material, MOMA.

126. Brownlow, *Parade's Gone By*, 401.

127. "Italians like other immigrants of this time had complex meanings projected onto them. . . . The Italian is envisioned as the untidy, non self-improving one, natural resident of the slum and natural doer of the most unskilled labor, and so is made a synecdoche for the lower classes." Richard H. Broadhead, "Strangers on a Train: The Double Dream of Italy in the American Gilded Age," *Modernism/Modernity* 1, no. 2 (1994): 1–19, 3.

128. Quargnolo and Redi "The 'Heroic Fiasko,'" 4.

129. Victoria de Grazia, "Mass Culture and Sovereignty," *Journal of Modern History* 16, no. 1 (March 1989): 65.

130. Bertellini, "Sovreign Consumption," 93.

131. Liam O'Leary, *Rex Ingram: Master of Silent Cinema* (Udine: Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, 1993), 146.

132. Ibid., 153.

133. The ghost of Marion Crawford haunts Fitzgerald—"Marion Crawford's mother died in the Quirinale Hotel at Rome. All the chamber-maids remember it and tell the visitors about how they spread the room with newspapers afterwards"—and runs throughout the pages of *Tender Is the Night*: "Baby Warren lay in bed, reading one of Marion Crawford's curiously inanimate Roman stories," as if Fitzgerald had preserved this late-gothic Anglo-Saxon representation of Rome. Ricciardi, "Fitzgerald in Rome," 36.

134. Ibid., 32.

135. *Romola* promotional material, AMPAS.

136. Richard Abel, introduction to *Americanizing the Movies and "Movie-Mad" Audiences* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

4. AMERICAN CINEMA IN ITALIAN: THE FORMATION OF ITALIAN AMERICAN CULTURE

1. Pete Hamill, *Why Sinatra Matters* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1998), 53.

2. Warren Susman, *Culture as History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), 158.

3. *La canzone dell'amore* is erroneously considered to be the "first Italian talkie." According to new information supplied by Denis Lotti the Hollywood-made *Sei tu l'amore?* was the first film with Italian dialogue to be screened in Italy. Denis Lotti , "Milano-Babilonia e ritorno," the introduction to the reprint edition of Alberto Rabagliati's diary *Quattro passi fra le "Stelle"* (Cuneo: Nero su Bianco, 2017). Furthermore, Alessandro Blasetti had made *Resurrectio* as a sound film beforehand, but Cines decided to launch first the lighter melodrama, *La canzone dell'amore*.

4. Janet Wasko, *Movies and Money: Financing the American Film Industry* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1982), 123. This bank was originally the Bank of Italy, founded in 1904 by Amadeo Giannini. It was immigrant banker Attilio Giannini who instituted the first relationship (in 1918) with the newborn film industry through his Bank of Italy, sharing an immigrant background and an ambitious entrepreneurial dream with the moguls. In 1923, he opened a special office for the motion picture business in Los Angeles and built branches near the studios.

5. Ibid., 127.

6. This interdependence is analyzed in my *Hollywood's New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996). For a discussion of dicusses the ebullient pre-Code period (1930–1933), see Giuliana Muscio, ed., *Prima dei Codici 2: Alle porte di Hays* (Milan: Fabbri, 1991).

7. See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

8. Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood, 1918–1939* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1997).

9. See Mark Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); and Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

10. Stefano Luconi and Guido Tintori, *L'ombra lunga del fascio* (Milan: M and B, 2004); and Stefano Luconi, "The Voice of the Motherland: Pro-Fascist Broadcast for the Italian-American Communities in the United States," *Journal of Radio Studies* 8, no. 1 (Summer 2001): 161–181.

11. Nancy Carnevale, *A New Language, A New World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 141.

12. Stanislao Pugliese, "The Culture of Nostalgia: Fascism in the Memory of Italian America," *Italian American Review* 5, no. 2 (Autumn/Winter 1996/1997): 14–26.

13. Stefano Luconi "Italian Americans, the New Deal State, and the Making of Citizen Consumers," in *Making Italian America: Consumer Culture and the Production of Ethnic Identities*, ed. Simone Cinotto (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 137–147, 137, 139.

14. Italian American leaders such as Leonard Covello and Tommaso Russo, argued that "Italian not English, was the language that would make Americans out of Italians." Thus "[t]he promotion of the Italian language was as much about creating a unified community of Italians as it was about weaving them into the fabric of American life." Carnevale, *New Language*, 9, 138.

15. "Throughout the liberal period . . . Italian consumption of foreign culture, both popular and elite, was among the highest in Europe. The fascists won followers by promising to reverse this situation of 'Foreign-worship' and create a national culture that would be well received abroad . . . For Mussolini, as for Hitler, the creation of a unified nation was a first step in the realization of a supranational empire that would implement a new political and economic order" (Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 7, 11).

16. Mario Quargnolo, *La parola ripudiata* (Gemona: Cineteca del Friuli, 1986), 17–18.

17. The media interaction behind cinema is evident in the professional biographies Fellini and other filmmakers, who wrote for radio, satirical magazines, and silent cinema.

18. See Giuliana Muscio, "Le ceneri di Balzac. Sceneggiatura e sceneggiatori nel neorealismo," in *Sulla carta, Soria e storie della sceneggiatura in Italia*, ed. Mariapia Comand (Turin: Lindau, 2006), 109–142.

19. "The use of this term is questionable in reference to a state that was continuously purging its cultural fields" (Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 9).

20. See Ennio Di Nolfo, *Intimations of Neorealism in the Fascist Ventennio*, in *Re-Viewing Fascism*, ed. Piero Garofalo and Jacqueline Reich, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 83–104; Sam Rohdie, "Capital and Realism in the Italian Cinema: An Examination of Film in the Fascist Period," *Screen* 24, nos. 4 and 5 (July/October 1983): 37–46; Marcia Landy, *Fascism in Film, 1931–1943* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986); and Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 76.

21. Rick Altman, ed., *Sound Theory/Sound Practice* (New York: Routledge, 1992); James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); and *Cinegrafie: L'immagine acustica*, vols. 1 and 2 (Ancona: Transeuropa, 1992 and 1993). With reference to Italy, see the historical-theoretical reinterpretations by Giorgio Bertellini, "Dubbing L'Arte Muta," in Reich and Garofalo, *Re-Viewing Fascism*, 30–82.

22. According to Durovicova, "the world markets, . . . by 1929 generated between thirty-five and forty percent of a major studio's profits." Natasha Durovicova, "The Hollywood Multilinguals," in Altman, *Sound Theory/Sound Practice*, 139.

23. Indeed, the information on the Italian side of the story comes mostly from Quargnolo, *La parola ripudiata*.

24. Ibid., 20, my translation.

25. "Linguistic reform had long been seen by many officials as a primary means of reshaping collective mentalities, but with over 20 percent of Italians communicating exclusively in dialect as

of 1931, the diffusion of Italian remained the main priority of Fascist language policies" (Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 138).

26. Lotti, "Milano-Babilonia e ritorno," 16.

27. "US-made Italian Language Films Outnumbered Product in Home Land," *Variety*, October 4, 1932, 11. The history of the cosmopolitan Italian films made in France (for example, *Prix de beauté* by Augusto Genina) or Germany (*La straniera* by Amleto Palermi) in 1930 would constitute a very interesting case of transnational cinema and confirms the Italian tendency to move toward Europe rather than Hollywood, especially during this period. Information about films in Italian made in the United States can be found in Alan Gevinson, *Within Our Gates: Ethnicity in American Feature Films, 1911–1960*, *AFI Catalog* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). The Author has written about these Italian American films in "Italian Americans and Cinema," in *The Routledge History of Italian Americans*, ed. William Connell and Stanislao Pugliese (New York: Routledge, 2017).

28. "The construction of a new ethnic identity took place within the context of a variety of language encounters, not simply those between Italian immigrant and native English speakers. Speakers of various Italian dialects and members of other immigrant groups were also an important part of the linguistic landscape that informed the construction of Italian American linguistic and ethnic identity." Carnevale, *New Language*, 113. See also Hermann W. Haller, *Una lingua perduta e ritrovata. L'italiano degli italo-americani* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1993).

29. Blasetti also writes: "But that America, which officially and notoriously refuses the labor of our colonists and workers and unofficially and notoriously comes to choose from among our men the basis of its industrial fortune without offering us the least compensation for the millions and millions that we will pay out to import its production valorized by the art of our race, our Government cannot allow, nor, we are sure, will it ever allow." Alessandro Blasetti, "Il nostro oro," *Lo Schermo*, no. 2, August 28, 1926, 3, my translation.

30. Pietro Osso, *Alberto Rabagliati* (Milan: Albore, 1941), 12. Piedmontese winemaker Secondo Guasti managed the large Italian Vineyard Company in the San Bernardino Valley. This company was amalgamated with California Grape Products, the California Wine Association, and the Di Giorgio Fruit Corporation within Fruit Industries, Ltd. in 1929, forming a giant wine distribution company. Simone Cinotto, *The Italian American Table* (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 2013), 146.

31. *Film Daily* (October 23, 1929) announced the establishment of Italotone, equipped with both disc and on-film sound recording systems, with a program of Spanish and Italian versions, having signed up "stars" Rina De Liguoro and Agostino Borgato, but there is no evidence that the project ever went beyond the making of *Sei tu l'amore?*

32. Stills of the film appear in a theater program—part of the Ruggieri Collection at the George Eastman House in Rochester (Eastman Museum) that preserves theater programs from the New York state area—and posters and films distributed by Michael Ruggieri in the 1930s, documenting East Coast Italian American film production. On the production of this film, see also *Variety*, November 19, 1930, Quargnolo, *La parola ripudiata*, 32.

33. Estavan often mentions Palange as a star of the immigrant stage in San Francisco. Lawrence Estavan, *The Italian Theatre in San Francisco* (San Bernardino: Borgo Press, 1991)

34. *Film Daily* (November 16, 1930) also defined *Sei tu l'amore?* as a "good Italian production with native cast, has interesting story with plenty of comedy." An article in the *New York Journal* (November 18, 1930) noted that "foreign-language films having proved unusually good attractions at the small cinemas about town [New York]. . . . This picture attracted a greater throng than has ever been seen in the 8th street Playhouse. In fact, the place was uncomfortably crowded."

35. In English: "very Italian 100 percent, the first talkie you have been waiting for." The use of the feminine article for a film was traditional in Italian film criticism of the silent period, as the Italian word for *film*, *pellicola*, is in fact feminine, but this use disappeared in the 1930s.

36. Lotti, "Milano-Babilonia e ritorno," 16.

37. For a positive review, see *Corriere della Sera*, September 12, 1930; negative criticism is reported in Quargnolo, *La parola ripudiata*, 32.

38. Gianni Isola, *Abbassa la tua radio per favore . . .* (Florence: Nuova Italia, 1990). The diffusion of jazz in Italy started in the 1920s, when Italian radio, targeting upper-class audiences, included programs of modern music. Italian radio was not a mass medium: a radio set was very expensive and only in the mid-1930s did Fascism launch the popular Radio Balilla. Radio only began to become widespread later, during the Spanish civil war and after World War II. "Fascist radio" was intended for collective listening in the work place, schools, and squares. Fascist influence was evident in "lectures" and in the news, but not in entertainment programs.

39. One "of the earliest historical epics made in Italy under the title of *The Fall of Troy*" according to the *Film Daily* (May 1931, 25).

40. Arthur Forde, "Tormento," *Hollywood Filmograph*, March 5, 1932, 6.

41. Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh and Anna Scacchi, eds., *Parlare di razza* (Verona: Ombre corte, 2012), 255–256.

42. Carnevale, *New Language*, 80.

43. Quargnolo, *La parola ripudiata*, 30.

44. Vasey, *World According to Hollywood*, 92.

45. From a Universal studio biography for the promotion of *Ali Baba*. Puglia clipping file, AMPAS.

46. Information culled from Quargnolo's *La parola ripudiata* and from various clippings.

47. Giuliana Muscio, "Come *The Big Trail* divenne *Il grande sentiero* e *Men of the North* divenne *Luigi la volpe*," in *Il film e i suoi multipli*, ed. Anna Antonini (Udine: Forum, 2003), 105–114. The materials of *Men of the North* preserved at the University of Southern California include a three-page *Suggested Treatment* of March 7, 1930, in English, and a screenplay in English, plus a *Scenario and Added dialogue* for *Monsieur La Fox* by Willard Mack (dated March 27, 1930) and a *Dialogue Cutting Continuity* (dated October 3, 1930). Illustrated presentation of the Italian version in the Italian film magazine *Kines*, February 22, 1931, 8–9.

48. In the original version, the film began with a title: "Dedicated To the Men and Women who planted civilization and courage in the blood of their children. Gathered from the North, the South and the East, they assembled on the bank of the Mississippi for the conquest of the West," which was translated into Spanish emphasizing Hispanic participation: "A los heroicos conquistadores del Ocidente norteamericano, en cuya hasana gloriosa, los valientes colonizatores hispanos tomaron parte tan activa, dedicamos respetuosamente esta obra." The Italian instead translated the American dedication literally, without references to Italians in the conquest of the West.

49. Durovicova, *Hollywood Multilinguals*, 151–152.

50. Richard Maltby and Ruth Vasey, "The International Language Problem: European Reactions to Hollywood's Conversion to Sound," in *Hollywood in Europe*, ed. David Ellwood and Rob Kroes (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994), 90.

51. Ginette Vincendau, "Hollywood Babel: The Coming of Sound and the Multiple-Language Version," in *Film Europe and Film America*, ed. Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1994), 208, 212.

52. "Americanness itself as the very signifier of universal human evolution, subsuming under it all the local currencies of cultural exchange, a limitless melting pot of mores, nations and classes" (Durovicova, *Hollywood Multilinguals*, 141).

53. Quargnolo, *La parola ripudiata*, 49.

54. Bruno Rossi, "Una voce friulana per *Biancaneve*: Adriana Caselotti," *Sot la Nape* 64, no. 2 (April–June 2012): 63–68.

55. Kenneth Anger, *Hollywood Babylon* (New York: Delta, 1975), 241. Anger describes him as "shady" and connects him with the gangs in control of the labor organization of the extras. David

Stenn, in *Bombshell: Life and Death of Jean Harlow* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), in addition to correcting some of Anger's information, reported that *Luigi la volpe* was a commercial success as an MLV film.

56. Francesco Savio, *Cinecittà anni trenta* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1979), 1:208, my translation.

57. See Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *Inquisition in Hollywood* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1980); and Nancy L. Schwartz, *The Hollywood Writers Wars* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

58. Giovannitti emigrated to Canada in 1900. He studied at a Protestant university in Montreal and then at Columbia University, in New York, but soon joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and became one of its leaders. He was among the organizers of the strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1912, for which he was arrested. In jail, he wrote the poem *The Walker*, which was published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. This enabled him to give voice to Italian workers in the United States, and to fight anti-Italian sentiment both within and outside the working-class movement. See Giuliana Muscio, "Giovannitti a Hollywood: un paradigma indiziario," in *Il bardo della Libertà: Arturo Giovannitti (1884–1959)*, ed. Roberto Lombardi (Campobasso: Cosmo Iannone editore, 2011), 205–220.

59. Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, The Great Depression* (New York: Vintage 1983).

60. The event must have taken place in 1930, when Eisenstein was in Hollywood. Emilio Franzina, *Dall'Arcadia in America* (Turin: Centro Altreitalie 1996), 123–124; the original text is Tito A. Spagnol, *Memoriette marziali e veneree* (Milan: Mario Spagnol Ed., 1971), 164–179.

61. Fraser M. Ottanelli, "If Fascism Comes to America We Will Push It Back into the Ocean: Italian Americans' Antifascism in the 1920s and 1930s," in *Italian Workers of The World. Labor Migration and the Formation of Multiethnic States*, ed. Donna R. Gabaccia and Fraser M. Ottanelli (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 182n18, 192.

62. Gian Piero Brunetta, *Il ruggito del leone* (Venice: Marsilio, 2013).

63. See Cinotto, introduction to *Making Italian America*, and *Italian American Table*. For an account of the Italian contribution to Californian agriculture, see Andrew Rolle, *Westward the Immigrants: Italian Adventures and Colonists in an Expanding America* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1999), 266–277.

64. "Modern Neapolitan song grew out of a tradition that has carried on since the end of the nineteenth century until today and has succeeded in influencing tango, blues, rock, protest songs, popular melodrama, and cinema, and it has given a personal character to all of them by modulating a euphonic language with a pronounced transnational and dynamic approach." Simona Frasca, *Italian Birds of Passage* (New York: Palgrave, 2014), 6.

65. "[With Bing Crosby, Lang] became the highest paid sideman in the music world." Luciano J. Iorizzo, "Jazz, the Early Years, and Eddie Lang," in *Italian Americans: Bridges to Italy, Bonds to America*, ed. Luciano J. Iorizzo and Ernest E. Rossi (Youngstown, NY: Teneo Press, 2010), 195. See also George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Focus of Place* (New York: Verso, 1997); John Gennari, *Blowin' Hot and Cool: Jazz and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Richard Sudhalter, *Lost Chords White Musicians and Their Contribution to Jazz 1914–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Marc Rotella, *Amore: The Story of Italian American Song* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2010).

66. Salvatore Guaragna (Brooklyn 1893–Los Angeles 1981) wrote about eight hundred titles, and three of his songs won Academy Awards. See William Zinsser, *Easy to Remember* (Jaffrey, NH: David Godine, 2000), 137–144.

67. "He incorporated a kind of Italian American scat into some of his songs, stringing together Italian-sounding nonsense with familiar Italian words." Carnevale, *New Language*, 158.

68. Stefano Telve, *That's amore! La lingua italiana nella musica leggera straniera* (Bologna: Mulino 2012), 26–27.

69. Rolle, *Westward the Immigrants* (144) documents the continuity of this practice in the United States with a photo and caption: “Indian Boys’ Band in Montana trained by Italian priests near the turn of the century. St. Ignatius Mission, Montana, a Jesuit establishment.” An Australian exhibit—*Musical Migrants. Pictures and stories from the Lucanian community in Melbourne*, at the Museo italiano, August 16 to October 12, 2013—documents the worldwide character of the experience.

70. Bruce Boyd Raeburn, “Stars of David and Sons of Sicily: Constellations Beyond the Canon in Early New Orleans Jazz,” *Jazz Perspectives* 3, no. 2 (2009): 123–152; and Sally McKee, *The Exile’s Song: Edmond Dédé and the Unfinished Revolutions of the Atlantic World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 14–42.

71. In 2008, I was able to study this collection on a visit to Zoetrope in San Francisco, thanks to the kindness of Francis Coppola and the support of Robert Rosen, Dean of the UCLA Film Department. I also interviewed Talia Shire (Coppola) and met Italia and Carmine Coppola in 1979. See Giuliana Muscio, “Coppola, o del regista come imprenditore,” *Nickelodeon* 4, no. 12 (1984): 1–2. My account here draws on my conversations with the Coppolas, the documents in the Pennino Collection, and an exploration of trade papers, cross-referenced with the Ruggieri Collection.

72. *Moving Pictures World* (July 4, 1908) presented a photo of a group of “amusement managers of Jersey” that included Pennino. Subsequently (November 31, 1909), the same journal carried an advertising for his activities as a distributor of international companies; the information about Caesar Film comes from the first page of *Film Daily* 9, no. 78 (New York, October 1, 1932).

73. He also wrote the lyrics (and Carmine Coppola the music) for the unidentified film *Gelosia*, *Amore che uccide*.

74. As documented by the Giorgio Mauri Collection, discussed in chapter 5.

75. The definition “song in a jacket” alludes to the performance style, because singers performed them dressed in the elegant style typical of the camorra *guappo*.

76. The authoritative text on the subject is Pasquale Scialò, ed. *Sceneggiata* (Napoli: Guida, 2002).

77. Paquito Del Bosco, “Avventure di canzoni in palcoscenico,” in Scialò, *Sceneggiata*, 136.

78. The booklet, preserved in the Pennino Collection was distributed in the United States by the Italian Book Company of New York, and by Bisesti in Naples.

79. Cennerazzo was a performer and author; he ran a stage company and his own theater. He wrote social theater, works in Neapolitan dialect, and songs in a traditional Neapolitan vein. Most of his works were published in the United States and were influenced by other musical cultures. However, the *Rapporto* on *Senza mamma*—a long document included in the Pennino Collection—makes no mention of the dramatist and attributes the works solely to maestro Pennino.

80. Both Nina De Charny and Gilda Mignonette sang “Senza mamma”; records of the song are preserved at the Library of Congress.

81. The Pennino Collection includes the printed *libretto* of *Senza mamma* in Italian and Neapolitan, published with the two other *sceneggiate* together with a typed translation in English by Italia Coppola at the time *Godfather II* was in production.

82. An analysis of this image and a copy of the logo can be found in Giorgio Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 13.

83. Scialò, *Sceneggiata*, 45–46.

84. Cinotto, *Making Italian America*, 10–11.

85. See Giuliana Muscio, “Orfane sorelle mamme: La figura della donna italiana nel cinema americano,” in *Incontri italoamericani: identità, letteratura, riflessi dell’emigrazione*, ed. Michele Bottalico (forthcoming); Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1985); and Caratozzolo, “Visibly Fashionable,” in Cinotto, *Making Italian America*, 35–56.

86. The Museo del Cinema of Turin, through Immagine Ritrovata in Bologna, has preserved a trailer of *Senza Mamma e 'Nnammurata!*, coming from the Ruggieri Collection.

87. Pellegrino Nazzaro, "The Mezzogiorno and the Questione Meridionale," in Iorizzo and Rossi, *Italian Americans*, 241. Nazzaro quotes F. Coletti "Dell'emigrazione italiana," in *Cinquant'anni di vita italiana*, vol. 3 (Rome: N.p., 1911).

88. In 1928, an official document of the censorship office took "into consideration that films based on strolling minstrels, bums, street urchins, filthy alleys, rags, individuals dedicated to 'sweet idleness' constitute slander to a population that nevertheless labors and attempts to elevate its social and material standing in life that the Regime imprints upon the country; moreover, considering that said films are realized according to criteria lacking the slightest artistic intent, undeserving of the beauty that Nature bestowed upon the soil of Naples, IT HAS BEEN DECIDED to withhold approval of such films that persist in relying on *cliches* offensive to the dignity of Naples and of the entire Region." Vittorio Martinelli, "The Evolution of Neapolitan Cinema to 1930," in *Napoletana: Images of a City*, ed. Adriano Apra (Milan: Fabbri Editori, 1993), 71.

89. Del Bosco, "Avventure di canzoni in palcoscenico," in Scialò, *Sceneggiata*, 135. The regime circulated memos to all the newspapers that no news was ever to be printed concerning the "stanchi della vita" (tired of living).

90. See Giuliana Muscio, "Martin Scorsese Rocks," in *A Companion to Martin Scorsese*, ed. Aaron Baker (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 259–276.

91. On filming in Fort Lee, see Richard Koszarski, *Hollywood on the Hudson* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008) and *Fort Lee: The Film Town* (Rome: John Libbey CIC Publishing, 2004). Koszarski's detailed research is used here to supply background information. On these films and other titles—possibly Neapolitan-American—see also Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema*, 258–275.

92. I introduced this film, and *The Movie Actor*, at the "To Save and Project" festival at MOMA, on June 12, 2006. The American title of the film was, significantly enough, *The Immigrant*. See also Giorgio Bertellini, "You Can Go Home Again: *Santa Lucia Luntana*, the Film," in *Neapolitan Postcards*, ed. Goffredo Plastino and Joseph Sciorra (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 97–114.

93. Francesco Paolo Cerase, "L'onda di ritorno: i rimpatri," in *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, ed. Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi, and Emilio Franzina (Rome: Donzelli, 2001), 1:115.

94. Eduardo Di Capua composed the music in 1898 and Giovanni Capurro wrote the lyrics. The song can be heard in numerous soundtracks accompanying images of Italy, not only of Naples.

95. "To speak of a 'fatherland' or *patria* to define origins may be misleading. It is the motherland, la *terra madre*, mother Earth, la Matria, to which we return. The maternal figure is of primary importance in Italian culture. . . . This is a country that worships the Madonna, and privileges the position of the *mamma*, a nurturing figure. Two important, fundamental things are received from the mother in the first years of life: nutriment, food taken from mother's breast, and language, the word received from the mother's lips." Suzanne Branciforte, "Voyage to the Center of Mother Earth: on Italian American Identity," in *America and the Mediterranean* (Genova: Otto, 2003), 139.

96. Ester Romeyn, "Juggling Italian-American Identities," *Italian American Review* 9, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2002): 95–128.

97. On Neapolitan cinema, see *Napoletana: Images of a City* ed. Aprà, and Stefano Masi, Mario Franco, *Il mare, la luna i coltelli. Per una storia del cinema muto napoletano* (Naples: Pironti, 1988).

98. Godsoe's credits include assistant director of *Social Register* (1934), produced by William deMille, and other Paramount pictures made at the Astoria Studios, New York, including *The Scoundrel* (1935) and *Soak the Rich* (1936) by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur; marginal but quality productions.

99. Orazio Cammi (Cammarota) (Procida 1893–Brooklyn 1978) left Procida with the Donnarrumma company and never returned home, as his daughter Angela told me in an interview. He was one of the more active immigrant performers on stage, radio, and film. He also directed another film in New York, *Piccola mamma*, not yet preserved.

100. As Koszarski specifies, "Sicily was reconstructed in the Watchung Mountains of north central New Jersey, with additional location work in Peekskill, New York" (Koszarski, *Hollywood on the Hudson*, 244).

101. Gevinson, *Within Our Gates*, 758.

102. A review of the film appeared on *La rivista cinematografica*, June 15, 1931.

103. Produced by Jersey Italo American Phono Film. As Koszarski notes, it had "a few exterior tracking shots with direct dialogue recording" (*Hollywood on the Hudson*, 245).

104. Martinelli sent me a review from *Informacio Cinematografica of Barcellona*, no. 143 (October 1935). Koszarski documents its presence at Jugoslovenka Kinoteka (*Hollywood on the Hudson*, 246–247).

105. The film is part of the Ruggieri Collection at the George Eastman House in Rochester, which also holds its publicity material. It could be either an Italian American film or a synchronization of a Neapolitan film.

106. See Carnevale, "The World Turned Upside Down in Farfariello's Theatre of Language," in Carnevale, *New Language*, 114–135; Bertellini, *Italy in Early American Cinema*, 265–269; Romeyn, "Juggling Italian-American Identities;" Hermann Haller, *Tra Napoli e New York. Le macchiette italo-americane di Eduardo Migliaccio* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2006); Deanna P. Gumina, "Connazionali, Stenterelli, and Farfariello. Italian Variety Theater in San Francisco," in *Fulfilling the Promise of California*, ed. Gloria Ricci Lothrop (Spokane, WA: California Italian American Task Force, 2000), 157–168; Francesco Durante, "'Farfariello': due 'macchiette coloniali,'" in *Acoma*, no. 16 (Spring 1999): 54–60; and Sandra Rainero, "Farfariello e gli altri: inediti di Eduardo Migliaccio," *Forum Italicum* 32, no. 1 (1998): 196–209.

107. Raniero, "Farfariello e gli altri," 199–200.

108. See "Farfariello," in Ettore De Mura, *Enciclopedia della canzone napoletana* (Naples: Il Torchio, 1969), 151–152.

109. Giorgio Bertellini, *Southern Crossings*: *Italians*, *Cinema*, *and Modernity (Italy*, *1861 to New York*, *1920*) (PhD dissertation, New York University, 2001), 533.

110. Carnevale, *New Language*, 131.

111. Luconi, *Voice of the Motherland*, 68. Most of the information in this section comes from this work.

112. Cinotto, *Italian American Table*, 137–140, and Stefano Luconi, "Not Only 'A Tavola': Radio Broadcasting and Patterns of Ethnic Consumption Among Italian Americans in the Interwar Years," in *A Tavola*, ed. Edvige Giunta and Samuel J. Patti (Staten Island: American Italian Historical Association, 1998); Mary Ellen Mancina-Batinich, "The Performers: Italian Immigrant Radio and Theatre in Minnesota, 1900–1950," in *Through the Looking Glass*, ed. Mary Jo Bona and Anthony Tamburri (Chicago: American Italian Historical Association Conference, 1994), 120–134.

113. Christopher Newton, "From 'The Prince Macaroni Hour' to 'Car Talk.'" *ItalianAmericana* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 5–15.

114. Later Mario Badolati played the father of Rocky Papasano (Steve McQueen) in the interesting Italian American melodrama *Love with the Proper Stranger* (1963), set in the East Side, with a pregnant Natalie Wood. He also appeared in the television series *Mission: Impossible*.

115. Emelise Aleandri, *The Italian-American Immigrant in New York City* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 1999), 105.

116. On media and ethnicity, see Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

117. "The kitchen, differently from the seclusion and specialization that characterized it in the middle-class home, functioned as an open space of multitask production and consumption, which assembled the purpose of a dining room, a parlor, and a workplace" (Cinotto, *Making Italian America*, 10).

118. Newton, "From 'The Prince Macaroni Hour' to 'Car Talk,'" 7.

119. Gianfranco Mingozzi's RAI documentary, *Storie di cinema e di emigranti*, includes a clip documenting a radio performance by "Sandrino and Perzechella" for radio WHOM.

120. Anna Maria Martellone, "Little Italy e l'opera," in *Il sogno italo-americano*, ed. Sebastiano Martelli (Naples: Cuen, 1998), 177.

121. "Why did Italian artistic 'democracy' have a musical and not a literary expression? Can the fact that its language was not national, but cosmopolitan, as music is, be connected to the lack of a national-popular character in the Italian intellectuals?" David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, eds., *Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Cultural Writings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 378.

122. "In time, Columbo would become known as 'the Vocal Valentino,' for, like Valentino, he possessed mysterious dark looks that made women swoon and men jealous" (Rotella, *Amore*, 53). As a radio star, Columbo competed with two other baritones, Bing Crosby and Rudy Vallée; the so-called war of the three baritones was much advertised in the media.

123. Giorgio Bertellini, "Sovereign Consumption: Italian American Transnational Film Culture in 1920s New York City," in Cinotto, *Making Italian America*, 85.

124. Enza Troianelli discussed the activities of Dora Film of America in *Elvira Notari pioniera del cinema napoletano* (Rome: Euroma, 1989). Several titles in the Ruggieri collection correspond, at least partially, to those exported by Dora Film, including *Le gesta del brigante Musolino* and other censored films.

125. A restored print of *Napoli che canta* was presented at the Giornate del Cinema Muto in Pordenone in 2003.

126. For more details on the Ruggieri Collection, see Caroline Yeager, "Fate, Chance, and Good Luck," *Image* 43, no.1 (Spring 2005): 22–26.

127. On these distribution practices and the monopoly of the majors, see my *Hollywood's New Deal*.

128. Estavan, *Italian Theatre in San Francisco*, 96.

129. Ibid., 101.

130. Ibid.

5. ITALIAN ACTORS IN CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

1. John Fante, *Wait for Spring, Bandini* (New York: Ecco Press, 2002), 74.

2. On the issue of hyphenation, see Giuliana Muscio, introduction to *Mediated Ethnicity*, eds Giuliana Muscio, Joseph Sciorra, Giovanni Spagnoletti, Anthony Tamburri (New York: Calandra Italian American Institute, 2010), 3–133; and Anthony Tamburri, *To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate? The Italian/American Writer: An Other American* (Montreal: Guernica, 1991).

3. See Robert Sklar and Vito Zagarrio, eds., *Frank Capra: Authorship and the Studio System* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); and Jonathan Cavallero, *Hollywood's Italian American Filmmakers: Capra, Scorsese, Savoca, Coppola, and Tarantino* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

4. On the "foreign policy" of the MPPDA, see Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1997).

5. Robert Sklar, *City Boys: Cagney, Bogart, Garfield* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 7.

6. Sergio Bugiardini, "L'associazionismo negli USA" in *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, 2 vols., ed. Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi, and Emilio Franzina (Rome: Donzelli, 2001), 2:560.

7. *Mussolini Speaks*, in *AFI Catalog 1931–1940*, vol. M–Z, ed. Patricia King Hanson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 1451; Steven Ricci, *Cinema and Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 133–140.

8. Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, eds., *Italian Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005); Claudio Fogu, *The Historic Imaginary: Politics of History in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2003).

9. Giorgio Bertellini, "Duce/Divo. Masculinity, Racial Identity, and Politics among Italian Americans in 1920s New York City," *Journal of Urban History* 31, no. 5 (July 2005): 685–726.

10. See George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Ricci, *Cinema and Fascism*; and Jacqueline Reich, "Rodolfo Valentino 'uomo forte'" in *Rodolofo Valentino: Cinema, cultura, società tra Italia e Stati Uniti negli anni Venti*, ed. Silvio Alovisio and Giulia Carluccio (Turin: Kaplan, 2011).

11. The economic sanctions that the League of Nations imposed on Italy after the invasion of Abyssinia forced the regime to adopt an autarchic system of production and consumption—a dramatic situation in a country without raw materials.

12. Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh and Anna Scacchi, eds., *Parlare di razza* (Verona: Ombre corte, 2012), 24–25.

13. "Attività della M.G.M., *Eco del cinema*, no. 127 (May 1934): 24; and "L'ambasciatore d'Italia negli S.U. visita gli stabilimenti della M.G.M di Culver City," *Eco del cinema*, no. 133 (December 1934): 26.

14. Giuliana Muscio, *Hollywood's New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 48–52; Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 40–45.

15. All citations are from Will H. Hays, *Memoirs* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), 512.

16. Ibid., 517–518.

17. Gregory Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

18. Hays, *Memoirs*, 522.

19. Stefano Luconi "Italian Americans, the New Deal State, and the Making of Citizen Consumers," in *Making Italian America*, ed. Simone Cinotto (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 137–147.

20. Frank Nugent, "Notes on a Minor Comic," *New York Times*, undated clipping; and obituary, ibid., October 22, 1945. Armetta clipping files, AMPAS.

21. Undated clipping, Armetta clipping files, AMPAS.

22. Helen Fay Ludlum, "The Gloom-Chaser," *Modern Screen* (September 1936), portraying him with Shirley Temple in *The Poor Rich Girl.* Armetta clipping files AMPAS.

23. Giulio Cesare Castello, "Alfabeto Minore di Hollywood," *Cinema*, no. 72 (1951), my translation.

24. See "Fascist Modernity and Colonial Conquest," in Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 125–130.

25. See Patrizia Audenino, "Mestieri e professioni degli emigrati," in Bevilacqua, De Clementi, and Franzina, *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, 2:335–354.

26. In *Get the Girl* (George Crone, 1932) Malatesta was the sadistic doctor Sandro Tito; in *Dressed to Thrill* (Harry Lachman, 1935), a comedy drama set in Paris after World War I, he played an Italian captain; and in John Ford's *Submarine Patrol*, he was the Italian soldier in the port of Brindisi. He also appeared in films that cast several other Italian performers, such as *Love Me Forever* (Victor Schertzinger, 1935) with Grace Moore, *A Night at the Opera* (Sam Wood, 1935), *Enter Madame* with Elissa Landi, and *Anthony Adverse* (Mervyn Le Roy, 1936).

27. Sklar, *City Boys*, 7.

28. *Film Fan Monthly*, undated, Puglia clipping file, AMPAS.

29. "Did you see the woman who played the part of Suzette, the maid? She has no real role . . . but what an artist!" "What the Author Thinks of *Grand Hotel*" in *Modern Screen*, June 1, 1932, 37–38, 144. In a later musical adaptation of *Grand Hotel*, Suzette was renamed Rafaella Ottiano.

30. Undated clipping, Ottiano clipping file, AMPAS.

31. "Jack LaRue was one of the handsomest men of the screen, a he-vamp of such renown that he came in the Valentino class." Untitled, undated item, La Rue clipping file, AMPAS.

32. Hubbard Keavy, "La Rue Thinks 'Suicide Role' A Fine Chance," *Albany News*, May 6, 1933; and Dorothy Donnell, "Will His First Big Role Make or Break Jack La Rue?" La Rue clipping file, AMPAS.

33. *Movie Classics*, May 1933, 31, 58.

34. An unidentified article titled "I'm Right, You're Wrong" juxtaposed Raft and La Rue and states that La Rue "was the first choice for the Raft role in '*Scarface*.' The test proved Jack too tall." George Raft clipping file, Rose, NY.

35. "As the priest who understood the impetuous lovers, la Rue was unforgettable," reads an undated item in the clipping files at AMPAS with photos of his main roles: *Story of Temple Drake*, *A Farwell to Arms*, and the western *To the Last Man.*

36. "Restaurateur La Rue Cooks Up a TV Role," *NY World-Tele. and Sun*, March 8, 1961.

37. Obituary, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 13, 1984.

38. *Filmlexicon degli autori e delle opere* (Rome: Ed. Bianco e Nero, CSC, 1967).

39. "Yesterday's Stars: La Rue doesn't like gangster stereotypes," *Mercury*, November 8, 1975, 40.

40. *Nino Martini: A Novelty*, press book, 25, Martini clipping files, Rose, NY.

41. "Cavalier of Romantic Song—that is Nino Martini, the greatest lyric tenor of the times. This gallant gentleman from Verona is gifted with the attributes that contribute to an epochal career—glowing magnetism, innate artistry and a God-given voice." "Romantic Nino Martini," unsigned and undated article, Martini clipping files, Rose, NY. Obituary, *New York Times*, December 11, 1976, Martini clipping files, Rose, NY.

42. Katherine Hartley, "Answer to a Maiden's Prayer" on Here's to Romance, unidentified item; Dora Albert, "Women Have Been Too Kind to Him, or Nino's Cross Country Flight (from his fans)," undated item, Martini clipping files, Rose, NY.

43. Undated clipping, with a photo of Martini and Landi together. Martini clipping file, Rose, NY.

44. Obituary, *New York Times*, December 11, 1976.

45. Obituary, *New York Times*, October 10, 1969.

46. He left to pursue his artistic career and escape from an embarrassing "sentimental complication," according to the documentary *Un ischitano a Hollywood: Eduardo Ciannelli*, produced by "Pe' Terre Assaje Luntane," September 2009. See also *Omaggio a Eduardo Ciannelli*, printed for the Premio Ischia, Lacco Ameno May 31/June 1, 1984.

47. On *The Food Gamblers*, see Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1990), 289.

48. His brother-in-law was Herbert Stothart, the composer of the musicals *Rose-Marie* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

49. Baron Gennaro Maria Curci, born in Trani in 1888, emigrated in 1916 and married Elvira Caccia in the United States. They worked together on stage and as extras in American cinema.

50. Obituary, *New York Times*, October 10, 1969.

51. Jerre Mangione, Ben Morreale, *La Storia* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992) 252–258.

52. See Alessandrini's interview in Francesco Savio, *Cinecittà anni trenta* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1979), 1:208.

53. Denise Hartsough, “Crime Pays: The Studios’ Labor Deals in the 1930s,” *Velvet Light Trap*, no. 23 (March 1989): 49–63.

54. Shot in simultaneous double versions, these films had direct sound in English for the international market and dubbed voices in the Italian release. Unfortunately, the dubbed Italian versions lost the distinguishing characteristics of his voice, which an American critic once described as sounding “as if he bites tenpenny [*sic*] nails in half for a pastime.” Obituary, *New York Times*, October 10, 1969.

55. Not to be confused with another Franco Corsaro, an actor born in New York in 1924. There is a rumor that Franco Corsaro was actually a shady character doing business on the side in Hollywood.

56. “In the 1960s the Nick Lucas model was the guitar of choice for Bob Dylan.” Mark Rotella, *Amore* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2010), 46.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., 58. Columbo’s first film experience was not as an actor: “During the filming, movie studios hired musicians to perform for the actors on the set, to help create the mood for a scene. In 1925, seventeen-year-old Columbo was hired by Paramount studios as a violinist” (ibid., 53).

59. Ibid., 60–61. On Prima and on the Italian contribution to jazz, see also Luciano Iorizzo “Italian Americans: Jazz, the Early Days, and Eddie Lang,” in *Italian Americans*, ed. Luciano Iorizzo and Ernest Rossi (Youngstown, NY: Teneo Press, 2010), 183–208; and Garry Boulard, *Louis Prima* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

60. Nancy Carnevale, “Louis Prima and the limits of Italianità in the Postwar Era,” in *A New Language, A New World* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2009), 175.

61. Kenenth Anger, *Hollywood Babylon* (New York: Delta, 1975), 241–246. “His heritage is both German and Italian, but he tended toward the Italian not only in facial features, but in mannerisms also. He was at best at Jimmy Durante’s cabaret Ragtime Jimmy’s around 1924. He was suave, dapper, debonair and sleek. He could be tough as nails and at the same time project a romantic image. . . . He was on the best-dressed list for years. . . . It was the underworld that financed his career in 1931.” Robert Parish, Steven Whitney, *The George Raft File: The Casebook of a Legend*. (Drake Publisher, 1973). Parish and Whitney’s research and bibliography are preserved within the Raft clipping file, Rose, NY. The file also contains an interview with Louis Ebling, dated April 23, 1973, stating: “He was not a member of the mob, he was only an employee with a salary and a car.”

62. A. Hughes, “That ‘Second Valentino Curse,’” *Photoplay*, August 1932, (unidentified items); “George Raft the Greatest Idol since Valentino—Women Crazy for Him,” and “Do You Know How George Raft Differs from Valentino?” Raft clipping files, Rose Library.

63. On the nationalization and racialization of the muscular body, see Jacqueline Reich, *The Maciste Films of Italian Silent Cinema*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 6, 7.

64. Sklar argues that there is no trace of his refusal in the production files at Warner. See Sklar, *City Boys*, 95–96.

65. Not the immigrant actress of the same name, but an important figure in the history of the Met, who would become Gatti Casazza’s wife.

66. An undated clipping states that her father was a music teacher, her brother Sebastiano a violinist and actor (in *What a Widow* with Gloria Swanson), Mario a pianist, and her sister Mary, a journalist in New York. Another brother was an illustrator, and one worked at the United Nations—an upper-class family indeed. Braggiotti clipping file, Rose NY.

67. Braggiotti was blonde, but in the film, she played an African princess, so she had her hair dyed black. In the article, there was no reference to Braggiotti as a performer in the United States.

68. “Spurns Stardom for Her Husband,” undated clipping with photo, Braggiotti clipping files, Rose, NY.

69. Undated item, Braggiotti clipping files, Rose, NY.

70. Undated item, Braggiotti clipping files, Rose, NY.

71. Salvatore LaGumina, Frank Cavaioli, Salvatore Primeggia, and Joseph Varacalli, *The Italian American Experience—An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland, 2000), 121, 169.

72. On Sandra Ravel Ratti, see, Alberto Rabagliati, *Quattro anni fra le Sstelle*" (Milan: Bolla, 1932) 69; interview with Boratto in Savio, *Cinecitta anni Trenta*, 1:158.

73. See Lary May, "Making the American Way," *Prospects*, no. 12 (1987); and Sklar, *City Boys*.

74. See Fred Gardaphé, *From Wiseguys to Wise Men: The Gangster and Italian American Masculinities* (New York: Routledge, 2006); and George De Stefano, *An Offer We Can't Refuse: The Mafia in the Mind of America* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2006).

75. Robert M. Lombardo, *Organized Crime in Chicago: Beyond the Mafia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012). Francesco Benigno puts forward a similar argument in reference to the camorra, which developed through political support according to the concept of "dangerous classes" characteristic of the nineteenth century, magnified by the use of popular media. See Francesco Benigno, *La Mala Setta: Alle origini di mafia e camorra 1859–1878* (Turin: Einaudi, 2015).

76. See Joseph P. Cosco, *Imagining Italians. The Clash of Romance and Race in American Perceptions, 1880/1910* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 10–11, 14.

77. See Giuliana Muscio, "Spectacle of Identity," *RSA*, no. 20 (2009): 29–46; and Muscio, "From the Lower East Side to Fifth Avenue, and Back" in *Public Space, Private Lives. Race, Gender, Class and Citizenship in New York, 1890–1929*, ed. W. Bohelhower and A. Scacchi (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2004), 313–322.

78. *Scarface* in the *AFI Catalog 1931–1940*, M–Z, 1867–1869.

79. Cinotto discusses the scene in reference to food and family in *The Italian American Table, Food, Family, and Community in New York City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 197–198.

80. *Scarface*, the *AFI Catalog 1931–1940*, M–Z, 1869.

81. Leonardo Tozzi, *Il mito di Hollywood e l'Italia degli anni '30* (Florence: Florence Press, 1980).

82. Steven Gundle, "Film Stars and Society in Fascist Italy," in Piero Garofalo Jacqueline Reich eds *Re-viewing Fascism. Italian Cinema, 1922–1943* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 315–339.

83. Vittorio Martinelli, *Le dive del silenzio* (Genova: Le Mani, 2001), 80–81.

84. In addition to Gundle, see Giuliana Muscio, "'I am not Greta Garbo: I am not Marlene Dietrich. I am Isa Miranda,'" in *Stellar Encounters Stardom in Popular European Cinema*, ed. Tytti Soila (New Barnet, UK: John Libbey Publishing, 2009), 90–98; and Elena Mosconi, ed., *Isa Miranda: Light from a Star* (Persico: Cremona, 2003).

85. Raffaele De Berti, "*La Signora di tutti* e l'avvento del divismo italiano," in Mosconi, *Isa Miranda*, 31–42.

86. Miranda did her own dubbing in *Il diario di una donna amata* and its Austrian version, *Maria Baschkirtseff* (Henry Koster, 1936), *Una donna tra due mondi* (Goffredo Alessandrini) and in the German version *Liebe des Maharadscha* (Rabenalt, 1937), in the prestigious *L'homme de nulle part (Il Fu Mattia Pascal*, Pierre Chenal, 1936), in *Le menzogne di Nina Petrovna* (Victor Tourjianski, 1937) made in France, and in *Du bist meine Glück* (Carl Heinz Martin, 1937) with Beniamino Gigli, again made in Germany.

87. On the whole campaign, see Mosconi, *Isa Miranda*, 12–15.

88. Ibid.

89. "Publicity Out on Isa Miranda," undated item, Miranda clipping file, Rose, NY.

90. Savio, *Cinecittà anni trenta*, 2:793.

91. "Miranda Slaps Back," undated item, Miranda clipping file, Rose, NY.

92. *Zaza*, *AFI Catalog 1931–1940*, M–Z, 2509.

93. Savio, *Cinecittà anni trenta*, 2:639–640.

94. Ibid., *Cinecittà anni trenta*, 2:640–641.

95. Geneviève Sellier, *Danielle Darrieux, Michèle Morgan and Micheline Presle in Hollywood: The Threat to French Identity*, unpublished essay.

96. Savio, *Cinecittà anni trenta*, 2:802.

97. "Hollywood Speeds Film Production, Carminati Reports," undated item, Carminati clipping files, AMPAS.

98. "Carminati Discusses Italian and American Theater," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 29, 1933, Carminati clipping files, AMPAS.

99. Louis Biancolli, "Carminati Defends the Accent," undated item, Carminati clipping files, AMPAS.

100. "American Accent Marrs Carminati's Italian in Rome," undated item, Carminati clipping files, AMPAS.

101. Irene Thirer, "Carminati Prefers Reel Role Which Isn't Regal," Carminati clipping files, AMPAS. In *The Tree Maxims*, he was an acrobat.

102. Mark Choate, *Emigrant Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), Rudolph Vecoli, "Negli Stati Uniti," in *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, 2:80–82.

103. Barclay Beekman, "Returning Home," undated item, Carminati clipping files, AMPAS.

104. Undated and untitled item, Carminati clipping files, AMPAS.

105. "U.S. Seizes Swedish Ship, Nets Carminati as Axis Sympathizer," item dated December 14, 1941, Carminati clipping files, AMPAS.

106. Untitled and undated item, Carminati clipping files, AMPAS.

107. Vecoli, "Negli Stati Uniti," *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, 2:81, my translation. On the relocation and detention of Italians during World War II, see Lawrence DiStasi, ed. *Una storia segreta: The Secret History of the Italian American Evacuation and Internment during World War II* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2001); Gloria Ricci Lothrop, "A Shadow on the Land. The Impact of Fascism on Los Angeles Italians," in *Fulfilling the Promise of California*, ed. Gloria Ricci Lothrop (Spokane: California Italian American Task Force, 2000), 188–214; and Carnevale, "Don't Speak the Enemy's Language," in *New Language*, 161–170.

108. The screen test was identified by Steven Ricci at the UCLA Film Archive.

109. It was a modern Christmas tale of three cowboy "kings" reaching the Star Auto Court run by an Italian American family—skeptical Nick and maternal Rosa (Galli)—when José and pregnant Maria Santos arrive and discover that there is no room for them at the inn.

110. Vecoli, "Negli Stati Uniti," *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, 2:81, my translation.

111. Ibid.

112. Carnevale, *New Language*, 159.

113. Stefano Luconi, "The Voice of the Motherland: Pro-Fascist Broadcast for the Italian-American Communities in the United States," *Journal of Radio Studies* 8, no. 1 (Summer 2001): 161–181, 174.

114. Rose D. Scherini, "Executive Order 9066 and Italian Americans," in Ricci Lothrop, *Fulfilling the Promise of California*, 229.

115. See, for example, the documentaries *Prisoners Among Us: Italian Identity and World War II* (Michael Di Lauro, 2003) and the Canadian with *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* (Nicola Zavaglio, 1997).

116. Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia*, 341.

117. Carnevale, *New Language*, 170. See also *Gli Americani e la Guerra di Liberazione in Italia* (Americans in the War of Liberation in Italy) publication of the International Conference of Historical Studies, Venice, October 17–18, 1994.

118. Argentina Brunetti, *In Sicilian Company* (Boalsburg, PA: Bear Manor Media, 2005), 178–181; on Donovan, see Muscio, *Hollywood's New Deal*, 59.

119. Brunetti, *In Sicilian Company*, 238.

120. Certified by an official document in the Pennino Collection.

121. From different programs in the Ruggieri Collection, GEH.

122. Vecoli, "Negli Stati Uniti," 81.

123. Undated newspaper clipping (probably February 7, 1943) in Italian presenting *L'angelo ferito* at the Accademia della Musica in Brooklin, in the Mauri scrapbook. My translation.

124. "La donna eroica che divise i perigli e le fortune di Garibaldi glorificata al DeKalb," in *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, January 4, 1944, in the Mauri scrapbook. My translation.

125. Carnevale, *New Language*, 176–177.

126. Tom Santopietro, *Sinatra in Hollywood* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2008), 58.

127. Stanislao Pugliese, ed., *Frank Sinatra: History, Identity, and Italian American Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 50; and Pete Hamill, *Why Sinatra Matters* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1998), 37. See also James Kaplan, *Frank: The Voice* (New York: Doubleday 2010). Sinatra, a complex and key figure in music, film and American culture, has been discussed in many books, both academic and popular.

128. "'I discovered at—what? Five? Six?—I discovered that some people thought I was a dago. A wop. A guinea.' An angry pause. 'You know like I didn't have a fucking *name*.' An angrier pause. 'That's why years later, when Harry [James] wanted me to change my name, I said no way, baby. The name is Sinatra, Frank fucking Sinatra'" (Hamill, *Why Sinatra Matters*, 38).

129. Ibid. 88, 120. Most information in this section comes from Hamill's book and from Pugliese's anthology.

130. Ronald Brownstein, *The Power and the Glitter* (New York: Pantheon, 1990), 94; and Pugliese, *Frank Sinatra*, 50.

131. Santopietro, *Sinatra in Hollywood*, 70. In the film, Sinatra, playing himself, takes a break from a recording session and steps outside to smoke a cigarette. He sees some boys chasing a Jewish boy and intervenes, first with dialogue, then with a short speech. His main points are that "we are all Americans" and that one American's blood is as good as another's and that all religions are to be equally respected.

132. The other Oscar he won for *From Here to Eternity* (Fred Zinnemann, 1953). Santopietro, *Sinatra in Hollywood*, 72; Pugliese, *Frank Sinatra*, 26.

133. Hamill, *Why Sinatra Matters*, 45. Sinatra was referring to the New Orleans lynching.

134. Gerald Meyer, "Quando Frank Sinatra venne a Italian Harlem," in *Gli Italiani sono bianchi?*, ed. Jennifer Gugliemo and Salvatore Salerno (Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2003), 189–205.

135. Leonard Mustazza, "Frank Sinatra and Civil Rights," in Pugliese, *Frank Sinatra*, 34–45.

136. Ibid., 34.

6. TRANSNATIONAL NEOREALISM: TOWARD AN ITALIAN AMERICAN FILM HEGEMONY

1. Tino Balio, *The Foreign Film Renaissance on American Screens, 1946–1973* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 3.

2. See Geir Lundestad, "How (Not) to Study the Origins of the Cold War" in *Reviewing the Cold War*, ed. Odd Arne Westad (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass 2000); Christopher Duggan and Christopher Wagstaff, eds., *Italy and the Cold War: Politics, Culture and Society 1948–1958* (Oxford: Berg, 1995); and Giuliana Muscio, "Invasion and Counterattack: Italian and American Film Relations in the Postwar Period," in *"Here, There and Everywhere": The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture*, ed. Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elayne Tyler May (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000), 116–131.

3. "[S]ome individuals, or, more likely, their children, are forced to change places, to move up and down, to accommodate changing labor needs." Richard Alba, *Italian Americans Into the Twilight of Ethnicity* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1985), 81.

4. See Claudio Pavone, *A Civil War: A History of the Italian Resistance* (London: Verso Book, 2014); David Ellwood, *Italy 1943–1945* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1985); and David Forgacs and Stephen Gundle, *Mass Culture and Italian Society from Fascism to the Cold War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008). Italian neorealism was a movement (1945–1953) and style of filmmaking advanced by Vittorio De Sica (*Sciuscià*, *The Bicycle Thief*), Roberto Rossellini (*Open City*, *Paisan*), Luchino Visconti (*Ossessione*, *La terra trema*), and Giuseppe De Santis (*Bitter Rice*).

5. Noa Steimasky, "The Cinecittà Refugee Camp (1944–1950)," *October*, no. 128 (Spring 2009): 23–55.

6. Stefano Cambi, *Diplomazia di celluloide?* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2014), 77.

7. An instrument of Cold War politics, the Marshall Plan aimed to support the economic growth of European countries so that they could become a market for American products. See Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943–1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 41. See also Forgacs and Gundle, *Mass Culture*, and Nicola White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion. America and the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry* (Oxford, NY: Berg, 2000). White writes, "The scale of Marshall Aid to Italy remains impressive: three ships a day and $1,000 per minute" (14).

8. See Thomas Guback, *The International Film Industry: Western Europe and America since 1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969).

9. Kaeten Mistry, "The Partnership between the Democrazia Cristiana and the United States 1947–48," in *49th Parallel: An Interdisciplinary Journal of North American Studies*, no. 14 (2004): 1–18.

10. In the film *'O sole mio* (Giacomo Gentilomo, 1946), the signal for the Allies to enter the city after the Neapolitan rebellion against the Nazis was the title song, performed on radio by baritone Tito Gobbi, who was, in the narrative, an Italian American OSS agent, infiltrated as a radio star.

11. John Huston, *An Open Book* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), 107–250. Narrating his stay in Naples, Huston writes: "Naples was like a whore suffering from the beating of a brute. . . . The men and women of Naples were a bereft, desperate people who would do absolutely anything to survive. The souls of the people had been raped. It was indeed an unholy city" (107).

12. Ginsborg, *History of Contemporary Italy*, 158. See also White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*, 15: "However, recent literature stresses that Italy was not putty in US hands." "Very best" was the expression Carl Milliken of the MPPDA wrote, addressing the State Department in the last days of the war. See Ellwood, *Italy 1943–1945*, 10.

13. Ennio Di Nolfo, "La diplomazia del cinema Americano in Europa nel secondo dopoguerra," in *Hollywood in Europa*, ed. David Ellwood and Gian Piero Brunetta (Florence: La casa Usher, 1991), 39.

14. Pierpaolo D'Attorre, ed., *Nemici per la pelle. Sogno americano e mito sovietico nell'Italia contemporanea* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1991); and Piero Craveri and Gaetano Quagliariello, *L'antiamericanismo in Italia e in Europa nel secondo dopoguerra* (Catanzaro: Rubettino Ed., 2004).

15. For the reception of "formalist" Orson Welles in Italy, criticized both by Communist and Catholic film critics, see Alberto Anile, *Orson Welles in Italy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013). On the history of Italian film magazines in the Cold War, see Giuliana Muscio, *Tutto fa cinema: La stampa popolare del secondo dopoguerra*; Vito Zagarrio, ed., *Dietro lo schermo* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1988), 105–116; and Silvia Cassamagnaghi, *Immagini dall'America: Mass media e modelli femminili nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra 1945–1960* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2007).

16. If in 1946 only 13 percent of the Italian box office takings went to Italian cinema, in 1954 the share jumped to 36 percent; and by 1962 it was 47 percent. In 1973, American cinema reached its nadir at the Italian box office with only a slim 23 percent.

17. Gian Piero Brunetta, *The History of Italian Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 117.

18. The bibliography on Italian neorealism in English is extensive; on its transnational aspects, see Kristi Wilson and Laura Ruberto, eds., *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007); and Saverio Giovacchini and Robert Sklar, eds., *Global Neorealism: The Transnational History of a Film Style* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013).

19. See Giuliana Muscio, "Gli americani: Breve storia del PWB," in *Neorealismo: Cinema italiano 1945–49*, ed. Alberto Farassino (Turin: EDT, 1989), 89–96. On *Paisan*, see Giuliana Muscio, "*Paisà/Paisan*," in *The Cinema of Italy*, ed. Giorgio Bertellini (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 31–42. Laura Ruberto documents film business exchanges involving Italian Americans and Italian films in her article "Italian Films, New York City Television, and the Work of Martin Scorsese" in *A Companion to Martin Scorsese*, ed. Aaron Baker (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 53–70.

20. Erica Sheen, "Dmytryk, Rossellini, and *Christ in Concrete*," in *Un-American Hollywood: Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era*, ed. Frank Krutnik, Steve Neale, Brian Neve, and Peter Stanfield (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 39–50, 46–47.

21. Balio, *Foreign Film Renaissance*, 41.

22. *Open City* was "sexier than ever Hollywood dared to be" (ibid., 43).

23. Ibid., 6.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. *Film gris* is a definition elaborated by Thom Andersen in his essay "Red Hollywood," reprinted in Krutnik et al., *Un-American Hollywood*, 225–275.

27. On blacklisted filmmakers in Europe, see Rebecca Prime, *Hollywood Exiles in Europe: The Blacklist and the Cold War Film Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014); Patrick McGilligan and Paul Buhle, eds., *Tender Comrades* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); and Muscio, "Invasion and Counterattack."

28. Goffredo Fofi and Franca Faldini, eds., *Avventurosa storia del cinema italiano 1935–1959* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979), 303.

29. McGilligan and Buhle, *Tender Comrades*, 18.

30. Prime, *Hollywood Exiles in Europe*, 49.

31. Mario Del Pero, "The United States and 'Psychological warfare' in Italy 1948–1955," *Journal of American History*, 87, no. 4 (2001): 1304–1334. Angleton played an important role in transferring experts and knowledge from the Italian atomic program in the United States, establishing a collaboration with the Sicilian mafia, utilizing Italian American contacts, and infiltrating people from the Fascist regime through Italian counterespionage in order to avoid the electoral victories of the left. See also John Ranelagh, *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 30.

32. On screenwriting in Italy, see Giuliana Muscio, *Scrivere il film* (Rome: Audino, 2009). De Concini cowrote *Esther and the King* (Raoul Walsh and Mario Bava, 1960) and *Jessica* (Jean Negulesco and Oreste Paolella, 1964).

33. Suso Cecchi D'Amico, *Storie di cinema* (Milan: Garzanti, 1996), 208–209.

34. Daniel Steinhart, "Hollywood Overseas: The Internationalization of Production and Location Shooting in the Postwar Era" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2013), 175. *Roman Holiday*'s true author was the blacklisted screenwriter Dalton Trumbo.

35. According to Ranelagh, many of the members of the OSS had higher education, a background as journalists or lawyers, democratic convictions and personal commitment in their counter-espionage or propaganda missions. Ranelagh, introduction to *The Agency*,

36. Bardi was related to Livio Giorgi, who sings *Senza mamma* in *Godfather II.* This information comes from Joseph Sciorra, "Serendipitous Encounters of an Italian-American Kind," iItaly (blog), July 23, 2009, www.iitaly.org/bloggers/10241/serendipitous-encounters-italian-american-kind.

37. See Max Corvo, *O.S.S. in Italy, 1943–1945* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1990); and Carnevale, *A New Language, A New World* (Urbana: University Press of Illinois, 2009), 170–173.

38. Frank Krutnik, Steve Neale, Brian Neve, and Peter Stanfield, collective introduction to *Un-American Hollywood*, 11, 307n27.

39. "The availability of subsidization was the cause and its perpetuation and development into a second wave, at times defined 'Mid-Atlantic.'" Guback, *International Film Industry*, 166. On American productions abroad, see Daniel Steinhart, "Hollywood Overseas:" *Runaway Romances: Hollywood Postwar Tour of Europe*, ed. Robert Shandley (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009); Vanessa Schwartz, *It's So French! Hollywood, Paris, and the Making of a Cosmopolitan Film Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Peter Lev, "Runaway Productions," in *The Fifties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 149–155.

40. See Elena Mosconi, "Il Tevere visto da Hollywood: l'impero e le colonie," in *Hollywood sul Tevere*, ed. Stefano Della Casa and Dario Viganò (Milan: Electa/Cinecittà, 2010), 15–21; and Hank Kaufman and Gene Lerner, *Hollywood sul Tevere* (Milan: Sperling and Kupfer, 1982).

41. Anile, *Orson Welles in Italy*.

42. Steinhart, "Hollywood Overseas," 33. Most of production details in this segment come from Steinhart's dissertation.

43. Ibid., 175.

44. Shandley, *Runaway Romances*, 35. See also Nathaniel Brennan, "Marketing Meaning, Branding Neorealism," in Giovacchini and Sklar, *Global Neorealism*, 87–102.

45. White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*.

46. See Alberto Anile and Gabriella Giannice, *La guerra dei vulcani* (Turin: Le Mani, 2010).

47. The Italian general consul launched the program on air. Ruberto, "Italian Films," 60.

48. Balio, *Foreign Film Renaissance*, 83; Ruberto, "Italian Films," 62.

49. Amoreno Martellini, "L'emigrazione transoceanica fra gli anni quaranta e sessanta," in *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, 2 vols., ed. Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi, and Emilio Franzina (Rome: Donzelli, 2001), v; *Partenze*, 369–384.

50. Rudolph Vecoli, "Razza, razzismo e italo-americani," in *L'emigrazione italiana transoceanica tra Otto e Novecento*, vol. 1, ed. Marcello Saija (Messina: Trisform), 334, my translation. "The position of Italians in America society shifted very rapidly during and after World War II . . . in the aftermath of the war, it was the white ethnics who made tremendous socioeconomic strides" (Alba, *Italian Americans*, 99).

51. Sheen, "Dmytryk, Rossellini, and *Christ in Concrete*," 47. See also Ranelagh *Agency*, 115: "Worried about the prospect of a Communist/broad left victory in the forthcoming Italian elections, [Forrestal] saw the CIA offering a means of secretly influencing the elections in the interest of the democratic parties, in particular of the Democratic Christian. Not only did this establish a long-running American support for several Italian political parties and politicians, it also brought CIA into covert political operations—influencing and molding societies—in addition to its intelligence and espionage functions."

52. On his support of Wallace, see "As Sinatra Sees It" [a letter to Henry A. Wallace], *New Republic*, January 6, 1947, 3 and 46; and Joseph Dorinson, "Frank Sinatra's House: Politics and Passion," in *Frank Sinatra*, ed. Stan Pugliese (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 23–32.

53. Denise Mann, *Hollywood Independents: The Postwar Talent Takeover* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

54. Alba, *Italian Americans*, 2.

55. Michael Frontani, "Narcotic": Constructing the Mafia—The National Televised New York Hearings of the Kefauver Committee, March 1951," in *Italian American Review* 6, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 173–202.

56. *House of Strangers*, in *Within Our Gates*, ed. Alan Gevinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 468.

57. Ibid.

58. Brunetta, *History of Italian Cinema*, 114.

59. Leonard Mustazza, "Frank Sinatra and Civil Rights," in Pugliese, *Frank Sinatra*, 33–46, 34.

60. He obtained the role with the support of Ava Gardner, not the mafia, as Puza hinted at in *The Godfather*. Tom Santopietro, *Sinatra in Hollywood* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2008), 137.

61. "Sinatra often adopted trademark Clift mannerisms of hunched shoulders, clenched fists, and a wounded look of vulnerability" (ibid., 138).

62. *Whithin Our Gates*, 863–864.

63. Ibid., 362.

64. Ibid.

65. Balio, *Foreign Film Renaissance*, 42. See also Laura Wittern-Keller and Raymond J. Haberski Jr., *The Miracle Case: Film Censorship and the Supreme Court* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008); and Ellen Draper, "'Controversy has probably destroyed forever the context': *The Miracle* and Movie Censorship in America in the Fifties," *Velvet Light Trap*, no. 25 (Spring 1990): 70–79.

66. The dramatist visited the island with his partner, Frank Merlo, an actor of Sicilian origins. Alessandro Clericuzio, *Tennessee Williams and Italy: A Transcultural Perspective* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). See also Margaret Bradham Thornton, ed., *Tennessee Williams: Notebooks* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 472.

67. After *The Rose Tattoo*, Lancaster played *Trapeze* with Lollobrigida and later appeared in Visconti's *The Leopard* (1963) and in Bertolucci's *Novecento* (1975), to mention but two very significant "Italian" roles of his.

68. Tennessee Williams, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 55.

69. *Within Our Gates*, 864.

70. Balio, *Foreign Film Renaissance*, 8.

71. Giuliana Muscio, "Scorsese Rocks," in Baker, *A Companion to Martin Scorsese*, 259–276.

72. The role of Clara, Marty's sentimental interest, played by Betsy Blair in the film, was played by Nancy Marchand, the future Livia Soprano, in the televised version.

73. For an analysis of the film, see Jonathan Cavallero, "Written Out of the Story: Issues of Television Authorship, Reception, and Ethnicity in NBC's *Marty*," *Cinema Journal* 56, no. 3 (2017): 47–73.

74. Joe De Santis had his debut in Italian American radio in 1931 and also worked on the immigrant stage. In World War II, he broadcast for the Office of War Information (OWI) in Italian and Spanish; he had a notable career on stage and on radio, in addition to film and television, specializing in foreign dialects. His most famous role was Big Jim Colosimo in *Al Capone*.

75. Rose Pelswick, "Judy and Conte a Joy in Warm, Human Film," undated item, *Full of Life* clipping file, Rose, NY.

76. *Within Our Gates*, 902.

77. Bosley Crowther, "The Rose Tattoo," *New York Times*, December 13, 1955.

78. Nick Tosches, *Dino* (Milan: Baldini e Castoldi, 2004).

79. Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco was a key figure of the musical world; a Jewish exile from Italy (he left in 1939, with the support of Toscanini), with a background in both classical and

modern music, he wrote about 200 film music scores at MGM, and taught most of the new composers (Riddle, Henry Mancini, Andre Previn, Jerry Goldsmith and John Williams). *Il Venerdì La Repubblica*, January 30, 2015, 114–115.

80. In 1956, having "regained his popularity as actor and singer, he was invited to sing the National Anthem at the opening session of The Democratic National Convention." Michael Nelson, "Frank Sinatra and Presidential Politics," in Pugliese, *Frank Sinatra*, 55.

81. Ronald Brownstein, *The Power and the Glitter* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 155. "Sinatra's relationship with Kennedy both in public and in private, was the closest in history between a major party presidential nominee and an entertainer, then and since." Nelson, "Frank Sinatra," 56.

82. "In the summer of 1959 the candidate's father, Joseph P. Kennedy, met with Sinatra to ask him to help raise campaign funds, recruit other celebrities to the Kennedy campaign, and record some theme songs. . . . Joseph Kennedy also asked Sinatra to speak with a number of labor and crime figures, all of whom were wary of the senator because of Robert Kennedy's recent attacks on mob influence in the unions as a Senate committee staffer. For example, according to Tina Sinatra, Joseph Kennedy told her father to ask Giancana to arrange Teamster union support for Senator Kennedy in the politically crucial West Virginia primary and, during the general election, in Chicago. FBI wiretaps subsequently revealed large mafia donations to the Kennedy campaign. According to former federal prosecutor G. Robert Blakey, the money went from Giancana to Sinatra to Joseph Kennedy. In return, Blakey says, Giancana and his colleagues were convinced that 'the Kennedys would do something for them,' namely, reduce FBI pressure on their activities." Nelson, "Frank Sinatra," 57).

83. Brownstein, *Power and the Glitter*, 147.

84. Santopietro, *Sinatra in Hollywood*, 299–300.

85. Mustazza, "Frank Sinatra and Civil Rights," 29.

86. Santopietro, *Sinatra in Hollywood*, 283.

87. Ibid., 295.

88. Mustazza, "Frank Sinatra and Civil Rights," 27.

89. Nelson, "Frank Sinatra," 58.

90. "At a time when segregation was virtually a way of life in the US and Black entertainers couldn't stay in hotels where they performed, Sinatra put his career on the line to try to make things better for many Black performers of the '40s and '50s" (Mustazza, "Frank Sinatra and Civil Rights," 36).

91. Nelson, "Frank Sinatra," 58; Brownstein, *Power and the Glitter*, 151.

92. Brownstein, *Power and the Glitter*, 152.

93. "Mobsters had been integrated into Hollywood financially, socially, and as 'fixers' on labor negotiations since the 1930s" (ibid.).

94. Nelson, "Frank Sinatra," 60.

95. Brownstein, *Power and the Glitter*, 167; Nelson, "Frank Sinatra," 61.

96. Santopietro, *Sinatra in Hollywood*, 295.

97. Stanislao Pugliese, "Longing, Loss, and Nostalgia," in Pugliese, *Frank Sinatra*, 10. In 1968, Sinatra supported Democratic presidential candidate Hubert H. Humphrey, and "even advised him on matters such as makeup and lighting for his television appearances. Sinatra even opened his home to groups of Black Panthers, urging them to support Humphrey" (Nelson, "Frank Sinatra," 63).

98. Nelson, "Frank Sinatra," 68.

99. Ibid., 55. Sinatra had written a piece for *Ebony* magazine in 1958 entitled "The Way I look at Race." The editors of *Jet* called it "the most significant stand taken by a famous white person since Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt" (Mustazza, "Frank Sinatra and Civil Rights," 35).

100. Robert Connolly and Pellegrino D'Acierno, "Italian American Musical Culture and Its Contribution to American Music," in *The Italian American Heritage*, ed. Pellegrino D'Acierno (New York: Garland, 1999), 417–418.

101. John Gennari, *Flavor and Soul*: *Italian America and Its African American Edge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 34.

102. Simone Cinotto, “Italian Doo-Wop: Sense of Place, Politics of Style, and Racial Crossovers in Postwar New York City,” in *Making Italian America*, ed. Cinotto (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 163–164. See also Joseph Sciorra, “Hip Hop from Italy and the Diaspora: A Report from the 41st Parallel,” *Altreitalie*, no. 24 (January–June 2002): 86–104.

103. Cinotto, “Italian Doo-Wop,” 164.

104. Ibid., 165.

105. Ibid., 177.

106. George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music*, *Postmodernism and the Politics of Place* (Chicago: Haymarket Paperbacks, 1997), 17. See also George Lipsitz, *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden History of Popular Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

107. Cinotto, “Italian Doo-Wop”, 165.

108. Tom Clarin, *Louis Prima*, *Keely Smith*, *and the Golden Age of Las Vegas* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2010).

109. Cinotto, “Italian Doo-Wop,” 177. “Crossover originally a music industry term for the marketing of black music to white middle-class audiences.” John Gennari, “Passing for Italian: Crooners and gangsters in crossover culture,” *Transition*, no. 72 (1996): 36–48, 39.

110. Ibid., 36.

111. Joseph Sciorra, “Italiani contro il razzismo,” in *Gli Italiani sono bianchi?*, ed. Geniffer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno (Milan: Il saggiatore, 2003), 222–242.

112. Daniele Dottorini, “*Il sorpasso*,” *Enciclopedia del cinema Treccani* (Rome: Treccani, 2004).

113. As Herbet Gans argues, “ethnic identity needs are neither intense nor frequent in this generation . . . ethnics do not need either ethnic cultures or organizations; instead, they resort to the use of ethnic symbols. As a result, ethnicity might be turning into symbolic ethnicity, an ethnicity of last resort, which could, nevertheless, persist for generations.” Herbert Gans, “Symbolic ethnicity: the future of ethnic groups and cultures in America,” *Racial and Ethnic Studies* 2, no. 1 (1979): 1–20, 1.

114. Alba, *Italian Americans*, 162.

115. Stefano Luconi, “Anti-Italian Prejudice in the United States,” in *Mediated Ethnicity*, ed. Giuliana Muscio, Joseph Sciorra, Giovanni Spagnoletti, and Anthony Tamburri (New York: Calandra Italian American Institute, 2010), 43.

116. The bibliography on individual Italian American performers and filmmakers is extensive, although only a few authors treat Italian American filmmakers as a specific group, including Jonathan J. Cavallero, *Hollywood’s Italian American filmmakers. Capra*, *Scorsese*, *Coppola*, *and Tarantino* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011); Anna Camaiti Hostert and Anthony Tamburri, eds., *Screening Ethnicity: Cinematographic Representations of Italian Americans in the United States* (Boca Raton: Bordighera Press, 2002); and Muscio et al., *Mediated Ethnicity*.

117. Richard Alba, “Twilight of Ethnicity: What Relevance for Today?” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 5 (2014): 781–785.

118. “It is therefore no coincidence that U.S. television (as well as film) in the 1970s witnessed an explosion of ethnic characters, including those of Italian American background.” Jonathan Cavallero and Laura Ruberto “Introduction to the Special Issue on Italian Americans and Television,” *Italian American Review* 6, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 160–172.

119. Ibid., 161.

120. The multidirectionality of the traveling of immigrant performers can be retraced in the case of Olga Barbato: born in Sicily, as a child she worked in Argentina with her family company.

121. Press book for *Dominick and Eugene* (1988), Academy of Motion Pictures and Arts Library, Los Angeles.

122. Muscio, “Italian American DOC,” in Muscio et al., *Mediated Ethnicity*, 241–252.

123. “In both African American and Italian American culture, the food/music nexus marks a space of intersecting freedom and servitude: an unembarrassed pleasure in one’s own bodily appetites and a catering to the bodily appetites of others” (Gennari, *Flavor and Soul*, 95).

124. Turturro performed in *Souls of Naples*, an adaptation of Eduardo De Filippo’s *Questi fantasmi* at the Mercadante theater in Naples in 2006, and *Fiabe italiane* by Italo Calvino in Turin, Milan, and Naples, in 2010.

125. White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion*.

126. Luconi, “Anti-Italian Prejudice,” in Muscio et al., *Mediated Ethnicity*, 43.

127. See David Roediger, *Colored White: Transcending the Racial Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

128. Alba, *Italian Americans*, 162.

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